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1. Fiction, American

To my very
near & dear &
always - friend
Fred

from
Marie

Paris.
June '13

NBO

WILD GRAPES

"What could have been done
my vineyard that I have not don
Wherefore when I looked that it
bring forth grapes, brought it for
grapes."

ISAIAH

WILD GRAPES

BY

MARIE LOUISE VAN SAANEN

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY
1913

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WILD GRAPES

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WILD GRAPES

CHAPTER I

EVERY afternoon, that month of April, David Ghent, the boy, and his grandmother Arnold, walked in the garden, down the narrow, pebbly path bordered by sprawling blackthorn bushes, to the stables.

The garden in defiance of English tradition rioted in wild and fragrant disorder, around old Ghent House. David's father did not care for flowers and refused to pay for the necessary services of a gardener. This unnatural indifference of a landowner extended to David, his son, whom he treated like the garden, with neglect. Both might thrive as best they could; only happily for David he had a grandmother who watched over him, while the garden had no one. So coarse grass waged war upon gentler flowers which had been planted long ago by David's mother.

But a garden is not easily suppressed. With the spring, forgotten seeds stirred and burst in a web-like harmony of blossom among the grasses. Later in June always came roses, struggling thornily for space and air. The trees, grave hoary oaks and elms, withstood all seasons.

This April the grass smelt of recent rains. Thin leaves unfurled; birds rustled in the branches, and the scent of Earth in travail drifted subtly like a vague sadness.

Every afternoon at the same hour, David's friends, the horses, and the mare Isabella awaited his coming. David loved them all passionately but best of all he loved Isabella, a splendid untamed creature of whom most of the stablemen were afraid. Only David's father rode her, governing her by fear.

This daily visit to the stables was an event. The grandmother leaned on a cane and walked slowly, because she was very old. David walked beside her. It was always the same. By the time they reached the yard, David would be fidgeting with ill-restrained impatience. Then the grandmother would say, " Don't wait for me, Davy dear."

He would leave her side with the spring of a released young animal, breathing in the fragrant odor of hay and oats, darting from stall to stall, rubbing his shoulders against the sleek necks of the horses, kissing their cold noses, feeding them with sugar stolen from the kitchen, and like an agile monkey dodging the sudden stamp of their nervous hoofs.

The old grandmother leaning on her stick, would stand at the entrance of Isabella's stall and quaver:

" Davy, be careful. You're such a reckless boy."

" I'm not afraid, I can take care of myself, Granny."

This was true. He was never afraid of anything or anybody . . . except of his father.

But only when he left the stalls, a wiry, keen-faced lad, with the beam of a smile for his anxious grandmother, did she relax her worry and assert enough authority to lure him away from the stables.

" It's no place for little gentlemen, Davy."

Then just as regularly as they went to the stables, they afterwards went to the grandmother's oak tree.

There was a worn stone bench, stained by damp and moss under this ancient tree. When the grandmother was not sitting in her room knitting socks for David, she always came to the bench. Sometimes early in the morning, from his window, David would see her sitting there motionless, erect, an old figure in black, her hands folded in her lap, as if she were waiting for someone to come and join her. Once he asked her:

"Why do you always sit in the same place, Granny?"

"Because it was your mother's favorite bench, Davy. During the last months of her life, she came here every fine day. She leaned on my arm. She was not even strong enough to carry you, though you were not a heavy baby."

After that David understood about the bench and never objected to sitting there during the twilight hush, listening to his grandmother weave beautiful tales. She told him stories of heroes, of fine deeds in past ages, of all that was brave and noble and sweet in life, of boys with hearts of men and of men with hearts of boys. Above all she told him about his mother whose name was Natalie.

While she talked she sat very straight. Her sad old face which was the color of a dried leaf and creased like a petal that has been pressed a long time in some beloved book, softened when she spoke of Natalie. Her withered eyes lightened to a deeper blue like fading forget-me-nots revived in water.

She always wore caps of fine black lace which hid most of her white hair, and black dresses that never rustled and low lace collars fastened at the neck by a round gold brooch containing a miniature of her daughter. Her hands were tiny and seemed never to have been intended to wither. She wore two wedding rings, her daughter's and her own.

"Your mother was a saint," she told the boy. "She died when you were a year old."

David always listened attentively to his grandmother, with a peculiar wide-awake intelligence which centered in his gray eyes. His gaze was direct and alert, like the quick look of a young dog who first hears an unanalyzed sound.

In order of sentiment he loved his grandmother, his mother as he had been taught to know her, and the horses. He hated Wheaton, the prim little English village which lay outside the garden, and he hated Ghent House. It was a house with a deceptively cheerful exterior and in silhouette suggested an attenuated feudal castle. Sturdy ivy climbed up the North wall and spread like an open fan to the small tower. But however stray sunbeams played over the gloss of the ivy or shone on the gray stone, inside the house reigned chill and gloom. Here everything slumbered in cold shadows as if hushed by fear. Dark wood wainscoting boarded up the walls; the high ceilings were austere and aloof; the great fireplace empty of warm orange cheer. In summer or winter the house was cold. Servants scurried like frightened rabbits on their silent-footed business; the old grandmother passed like a shadow, and David

always tiptoed his way up and down the wide turning stairs. Only Mrs. Dollinge, the housekeeper, a placid, unimaginative woman, seemed unaffected by the awesome atmosphere of the house. She directed the household conscientiously, counted the linen, mended David's clothes, and she curtsied so low when by chance the master of the house addressed her that she never noticed his face. No one ever saw him except at meals when he presided at the round mahogany table, with the grandmother on his right and David on his left. He rarely ever spoke. His look was bleak, his voice wintry. Sometimes he scolded David unjustly.

To the left of the hall was his library. There among musty books, he sat like a wizened brooding bird all day, late into nights. No one knew much about him; but it was whispered that he was subject to rages that destroyed whatsoever and whomsoever they touched. Since his wife's death no one had seen him in one of these rages.

He was a shriveled man with fierce eyes, a thin beaked nose and a mouth like a seamy knot. When late at night, he stalked out from his library up the wide turning stairs to his bedroom, he walked alone in the house. Each night he passed the door of what had been his wife's room. He never entered it. Yet had he known, behind that door, there was the mysterious intense vitality of a room which keeps alive after its occupant has departed. For every day upon their return from the afternoon walk, David and his grandmother came there on a pilgrimage.

It was a sad little room with ugly dark red wall paper and heavy red curtains that smothered the windows. A bed in the corner took up most of the space. It was a massive piece of early Victorian mahogany and reared a cumbersome pretentious back against the wall, spreading its large surface depressingly far out into the room.

The grandmother sighed whenever she looked at it and told David over and over again: "Your poor mother lay there like a wounded bird. All the while she was sick she used to tell me how she longed for a pink room and a white bed."

David looked soberly at a pastel portrait of his mother which hung near the window. It had been painted when she was a young girl. She wore her light brown hair parted and down over her ears. She wore little gold earrings and a white dress. Her face was long and delicately tinted. Her eyes and mouth were timid. David thought she looked like a pale, sad, fairy-tale princess, the kind who were always shut up in towers.

This April he was twelve years old. He planned that when he was much older, perhaps in five years, he and his grandmother would steal this portrait and run away together somewhere to a little cottage far from Ghent House and Wheaton village.

But this was not to be.

One afternoon after a day's cold drizzle and gray skies, the grandmother sat until late dusk on her favorite bench under the old tree. The next morning, when David knocked at her door she called to him in a queer high voice.

"Tell Mrs. Dollinge to come to me at once, Davy."

All that day Mrs. Dollinge trotted importantly to and fro bearing mysterious plasters and steaming tea made of herbs. Whenever David waylaid her and asked for news she shook her head and sighed.

"The poor lady's caught her death of cold. She should have a doctor."

"Well, why doesn't she?" whispered David.

Mrs. Dollinge shook her head again.

"Your father won't have a doctor in the house, dearie. When your mother . . . but there now, run along. I can't stop talking to you all day." Whereupon she creaked heavily away and left the boy to ponder.

He walked alone in the garden that day, and went alone to the stables. Isabella seemed to understand. She laid her beautiful head on his shoulder and whinnied softly, which comforted him.

But the next day the grandmother was worse, and at meals, as he sat to the left of his father, he could hardly bear to look at the empty seat on his father's right. John Ghent sat silent and somber. His son did not dare to speak to him of the grandmother.

The second night David did not sleep well. He heard people creaking up and down the hall all night. But at last he closed his eyes and dreamed he was riding Isabella through misty lands of delight, until suddenly he reached a stone wall so high that Isabella could not jump it. An obscure terror of a murky something behind him, creeping up, brought anguish to his soul. In vain he coaxed Isabella on

to the impossible. She could not jump! The something crept nearer . . . he screamed and woke.

Mrs. Dollinge was bending over him, her face twisted to a strangely grotesque mask of distress.

"Davy get up . . . your grandmother's dying."

Through the window a grayish streak of dawn sifted and settled in unreal light that bathed familiar objects wanly.

Young David sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"Come quickly, Davy . . ." whispered Mrs. Dollinge.

He slid obediently from his bed. He folded about him his little blue flannel dressing-gown, shuffled into stockings and shoes, and followed Mrs. Dollinge down the long hall. She walked softly and bade him do the same.

"Hush, don't wake your father. She doesn't want him to know."

She left him at his grandmother's door, pushing him in softly.

"She wants to see you alone."

Grandmother Arnold lay motionless, her face turned towards the wall. The window was open, a faint chirping outside in the garden announced the early stir of birds.

Then David was suddenly afraid. His grandmother did not look the same in bed, without her cap of black lace. Her white hair was tossed in scanty strands over the pillows, the sharp line of her body formed uneven ridges under the bedclothes.

As he stood there hesitating, she moved her head from side to side and faintly called his name.

"Davy!"

Solemnly he tiptoed nearer and sat on a chair placed beside her as if for his coming.

"Yes, Granny, here I am."

One of her tiny shriveled hands crept feebly over the counterpane.

"Put your hand on mine, Davy."

"Yes, Granny."

"Davy, you're a good boy."

Suddenly he burst into wild sobs and slid from the chair to the floor beside the bed, burying his head in the sheets.

"Don't leave me, Granny, don't!"

She tried to stroke his hair, murmuring:

"Hush, darling boy . . . hush! Be a man!"

He did his best to obey her and to quiet his sobbing. Soon he was sitting on the chair again and holding her hand.

But every once in a while a great gulping sob of woe which reached from the very caverns of his childish soul, pushed its way out in short gasps. His grandmother began to speak very slowly, as if each word were an effort.

"Listen, Davy, and never forget . . . what I am going to tell you. Whatever happens in your life . . . always be true to the finest things. Do you know what they are? . . . kindness of heart, honor to yourself and other men . . . and women, and being unafraid . . ."

She paused a moment struggling for breath.

"Never betray . . . never by any fault of yours, make a woman weep."

She raised herself among the pillows and leaned forward to meet the brave true look in David's young eyes.

"Never make a woman weep as your father made your mother weep." Her old voice grew high and fierce. "Do you know how your mother died, Davy?"

"No, Granny."

"Your father broke her heart. You can't know what that means! He frightened her to death. You know when you are frightened of things in the night, child, what it is?"

David sat huddled in his chair, the blue flannel dressing gown swathed about his small shivering figure. His eyes were wide open and horrified.

"Your father went into such tempers . . ." continued the old grandmother, "that for hours afterwards she would sit and tremble. She used to pray . . . that you should not inherit his temper . . . remember all your life long, Davy . . . that you are her child . . . and mine. Do you think I would have stayed here . . . after her death . . . if it were not for you? I stayed to watch over you . . . to direct you as far as I could. You are old enough now to go on . . . alone." She closed her eyes and lay exhausted among the pillows.

David sat motionless trying to grasp a new and ugly world. He sat trying to deal with thoughts too immense, too bitter, too cruel for his imagination. He wanted to cry again like a baby; but he knew that he must not cry.

His grandmother opened her eyes. "I always

felt that he killed your mother . . . Carry that always, Davy . . . in your heart . . . and go be a man of whom she might be proud. Kiss me, boy, and go! I'm tired out . . . God bless you!"

David stood beside the bed like a little soldier, and faced bravely wide untried things. "I promise, Granny."

Then he bent and kissed her, "I'll be in to see you this afternoon, Granny."

"Good-by, David. Never forget . . . God bless you."

"I won't forget . . . but you'll get well, Granny."

He closed the door of the room softly. His heart felt near to bursting and he swallowed the tears that stuck in his throat.

He went back to his room, dressed and stole quietly down to the kitchen, where the good-natured cook gave him a bowl of milk and a piece of bread. Then he went out into the garden.

It was a radiant morning. The sun splashed down from a silken blue sky. A scent of daffodils was in the golden air.

Jim, a stable boy, swaggered up the garden path whistling, his hands in his pockets. David saw him coming and hid behind a bush to avoid greeting him.

The old stone bench, stained olive green with moss, lay in shadow, when David, obeying a vague instinct came to it. Such an overwhelming sense of desolation swept over him that he dropped flat beside it on the damp grass. He dug his nails in the earth; he buried his face in the bitter sweet green

and lay so for uncounted time. The scent of the roots of growing things stifled him with rich warm fumes. A ray of sun fell on the back of his bare head and burned gratefully. He felt quite alone, as if no one loved him or cared what became of him.

He stayed there for a long time, a dim revolt of things as they were, stirring in his boyish mind. At last he dragged himself to his feet and started slowly back to the house. Once he looked up to his grandmother's window.

Jim passed him running towards the stables. When he saw David, he ducked his head and did not stop.

"Hey, Jim, where're ye going?" called David.

But Jim did not answer. So David crept up the stairs to his room. He could not bear the idea of seeing his father. He would ask Mrs. Dollinge to let him lunch with her. Then he saw her coming towards him down the hall. Her portly figure rolled as she walked. She was crying. She came up to him and putting her arms around him, drew him into her room and shut the door.

"Dearie, be brave," she said. "Your poor dear grandmother is at rest."

David groped in sudden blackness that waved before his eyes. Far away he heard Mrs. Dollinge saying:

"There, there, poor lamb . . . don't take on so. She wouldn't like it. See, Davy, she left this for you. I was to give it to you."

He felt a small box being thrust into his hand, and stood still a moment while the good Mrs. Dol-

linge murmured conventional consolation. Then he wrenched from her motherly arms, rushed to the door, fumbled for the knob, opened it and fled down the hall, down the stairs.

Mrs. Dollinge called after him in vain.

He ran blindly, clutching the box, until he reached a clump of bushes near the old bench. Gasping for breath and choking with tears he sank down among the bushes and opened the box. Neatly laid in cotton was his mother's wedding ring, his grandmother's gold watch and her brooch with the miniature. He stared at them, big tears rolling and dropping and rolling and dropping on the cotton.

His grandmother was gone. She would never again walk with him in the garden, never again visit the stables, never tell him stories, never sit on the stone bench. There was only his father now in the house. At the thought of his father, the boy cried harder than ever. He hated, he feared his father now.

It was luncheon time. Even though his grandmother was dead, his father would sit at the table and eat his lunch as if nothing had happened.

If he went back to the house, he would have to sit on his father's left and see the empty chair opposite him. He thrust the box into his pocket, crept from the bushes and peering towards the house, ran from it, in the direction of the stables. The stablemen would be at the house eating too.

Isabella moved in her stall and turned her head to greet him. The air was heavy with the odor of hay and oats.

David's heart beat quickly. There was no one to love him now except Isabella. He stole into the stall and mechanically unfastened her halter. He whispered to her and she whinnied softly. Then still as if in a dream he went to where her saddle was kept, dragged it down from its hook and saddled her. She did not seem surprised. In a short time she was ready, docile to his hand and voice. Then he led her alongside a small ladder, climbed up it, and on to her back, took the reins in his hand, chirruped softly and was off. The click of her hoofs on the road pounded uneven rhythm.

He guided her out of the back gate; surrendering to the easy stride of her lithe body. She flung back her head with a reckless jerk to the jingle of snaffle and curb and swung away from the gate, to the right, past the turning, away from the village, over the hill. Now David rode far into the country, bending low in the saddle, so that his head almost touched her black mane.

The drawn blinds of his grandmother's room seemed far away.

Gradually he forgot that he was hungry and sad. The day was like a light blue and gold banner that waved and rippled, all sheen and gold.

A gentle wind played with his hair, low branches rustled and brushed across his head. The road wound ahead tranquilly. Isabella beat tunes upon it.

But there came a moment when the mare slackened her pace and drooped her head, when the obscure

ache in David's heart and head, drugged by the ride, crept back sharply. The hour trailed in soft yellow shadows over the blackthorn hedges; a dim warning of twilight fell like a breath on a mirror.

Then David turned homewards because he had nowhere else to go, and Isabella's flanks were steaming and wet, and he was hungry. So back they went the way they had come, by the postern gate up the stable road.

Mason, the old family coachman, was standing peering down the road. Behind him, there seemed to be unusual excitement among the stable boys clustered in the yard.

Mason came forward and took Isabella by the bridle.

"Master David," he said, "you've done a fine piece of work this day."

"She isn't too tired," answered David, and meekly allowed himself and Isabella to be led back to the stable.

The old coachman shook his head gravely as he helped David down from the saddle.

"Your father's been here asking for you. He missed the mare. I'm thinking there's trouble ahead, Master David. What ever got into you to go off this day?"

"I had to go," said David. "Take care of Isabella, Mason. I'll explain to my father."

He walked away, a slight dignified little figure, holding his head high. Mrs. Dollinge met him at the back door of the house.

"Davy," she wailed, "how could you? Your father's in a terrible way. You're to go to him at once."

"I must eat first," said David simply.

The cook, under Mrs. Dollinge's hysterical directions, set a tray before him with cold meat, cake and milk. He ate quietly. Mrs. Dollinge stood over him, lamenting. But he hardly listened to her. When he had finished, he walked slowly out of the kitchen and made his way to the big hall.

The library door was shut, but as he rapped on it softly, it was flung open at once. Whereupon he walked in and faced his father.

John Ghent slammed the door behind his son, and stood staring at him with fierce eyes. His short lean body looked twisted and knotted like a whip ready to crack.

David put his back to the door and squared his shoulders bravely.

"Here I am, father," he said.

The room was big and sunless, lined with bookshelves. A great black walnut table, littered with dusty papers and heavy books, stood in the middle of the floor. The air reeked of stale tobacco and rotting leather.

"You have disobeyed me," began John Ghent, in a voice like a dry whistle. "You rode the mare against my wishes. You careered over the country when your grandmother lay dead in the house. You chose the day when a lot of empty-headed women lost their heads and neglected to look after you properly, to sneak away. . . ."

"I meant no disrespect to my grandmother. . . ."

"Hold your tongue, it isn't a question of her!" shouted John Ghent. "She spoiled you . . . she rotted you. You're not dealing with her any more. There's an end to that. You're dealing with *me*." He went to the library table, opened a drawer and took from it a short round stick. "I'm going to beat you so that it will be many a day before you can ride again."

As in a nightmare David saw his father come towards him, and reach out to seize him. Then suddenly released from the paralyzing fear which had held him still, he sprang to one side. He was trembling; his teeth chattered; his hands were icy cold, but it was not from fear.

"Don't touch me," he stammered.

His father's thin, sharp figure animated by an increasing frenzy of violence, dashed towards him again. "You young dog!" David leaped away as nimbly as a wild animal, swerved out of reach of the stick and reached the library table. He dodged behind it, putting it between his father and himself.

John Ghent grew livid. "I'll teach you . . ." he cried. "I'll teach you." Then suddenly David, in a voice which did not seem to belong to him, said:

"You shan't beat me! You shan't frighten me to death as you did my mother."

There was a silence which lasted only the fraction of a second — a swift intake of breath before the shock of action.

David saw his father shoot forward, seize from

the table a book which was big and heavy, raise his arm and fling.

Then something whizzed and struck the boy. He fell like a young tree.

. . . . . .

He was in bed in his own little room. Mrs. Dollinge was bending over him.

"Am I dying?" he said.

"Bless your heart, no, dearie."

"What hurts so?" He put a hand to his face and felt a bandage.

Mrs. Dollinge's kind eyes filled with ready tears. "Poor lamb! Your father went mad-like. You've a nasty cut."

"Oh!" whispered David faintly.

"Poor lamb," said Mrs. Dollinge again. "It's well for you that I can doctor a bit. It's fixed up nice now. He's something terrible, your father, when he loses his temper. I was listening behind the door because I was afraid for you. When you fell I rushed in. Your father was standing like turned to stone. I gave him one look, took you up and carried you here in my arms."

David closed his eyes. He felt dizzy and weak.

Mrs. Dollinge tucked the sheets around him. "Try to sleep now, dearie. It's late. I'll watch over you till you're quiet."

Soon he sank into a dull, dreamless state which lasted until a flush of pink drifted in from the window. Even then he woke slowly, his eyes leaden, a dull ache beneath the bandage.

The big clock on the mantelpiece ticked and

struck five o'clock in the morning. The boy raised his head and looked about him.

Then painfully he thought backwards until he reached a vivid image of the sickening instant when his father threw the book. Still further back lay a desolate sense of loneliness, and ahead an obscure fear and revolt. The next time his father might kill him.

He listened. Everything was quiet.

His clothes lay in a heap beside the bed. Very slowly he sat up. The dizziness was better, so he slid to the floor and stood for a minute seeking balance. Then he walked over to the mirror. A bandage round his forehead made his head look smaller.

He began to dress, first feeling in the pocket of his coat. The box was safe, and still held the wedding ring, the watch and the brooch.

Behind the clock was a little iron bank which next he dragged out and jingled. From time to time his grandmother had given him small sums of money. The economies of seven years were in this bank. He had saved to buy the cottage where he and his grandmother would go some day, far from Ghent House, far from Wheaton.

Now he opened the bank and counted the pennies and counted the bits of silver. In all there were two pounds, which he thrust in his pocket. Then opening the bureau drawer where Mrs. Dollinge carefully laid away his stockings and linen, he chose a change of linen and a pair of stockings, did them up clumsily in a towel and went over to his little

desk. At this desk he had learned all he knew of reading and writing, with his grandmother as a patient teacher.

He took up the pencil now and a clean sheet of paper. Frowning and biting his lips, he traced laboriously:

"Father, I'm never coming back. Your son David."

He left the paper on the bed, took up his cap and the bundle and tiptoed out of the room.

The great house was still. David dared not enter the room where lay his grandmother, but he paused an instant before the door. Then a small, resolute figure, he stole down the wide turning staircase and round by the back hall to the kitchen.

In the pantry he found a breakfast of milk and cake, of which he partook gratefully. The morning air was pure and sweet. He would have liked to go to the stables and bid Isabella good-by, but by now the stable boys would be awake.

So like a fugitive who escapes from a prison, David Ghent left the house where he was born, and set forth alone through the garden which glistened white with dew, past the gate, to the long empty road which led away over the hill.

He had no clear idea where he was going, but he went forward bravely. Birds twittered overhead; the sky was blue, the silken fields billowed away to a shining horizon.

Beyond somewhere must lie the sea. Boys who ran away always went to the sea.

David turned in the direction where he believed

he would find the sea and trudged towards it. He tried not to think of his grandmother because he did not want to cry like a baby. His head ached badly.

CHAPTER II

THE sea was far away — at least so it soon seemed to David. He remembered having heard Mason the coachman once say that Tilbury lay fifteen miles from Wheaton and that many big ships sailed to and from Tilbury. There were sign-posts along the road so that no observant traveler might lose his way; but fifteen miles for young short legs, however sturdy, represented a considerable distance.

David, with the faith of a child and the determination of a patient man went eagerly towards what seemed to him an immediate and fascinating goal, beyond which loomed vague promise of freedom and adventure such as he had read about. What boy of his age has not longed for an occasion of entering upon some bold and untrammeled career with the sea as starting point, leading to thrilling and lawless consequences of shipwrecks, pirates and treasures!

After the first human twinges of sentiment so rapidly allayed in youthful imaginations, David yielded to a pleasurable sense of unaccustomed excitement, and under its stimulus, walked several miles. Then gradually his pace slackened.

The road played tricks upon his impatient vision. It unfurled a narrow streamer ahead of him con-

verging to a thin point, beyond which he imagined the sea. But as in tantalizing dreams, this point receded with his advance. All he saw was gentle waves of country, lying fallow or tilled, and cottages sprouting from gardens and occasional glimpses of great houses in stately setting of parks. Carts and carriages burdened with indifferent and insolent humanity, passed the boy. He gazed after them more and more wistfully as his steps grew more lagging.

His head throbbed under its bandage; his bundles began to feel heavy. It was noon now. He had been walking six hours.

Then at a moment when the sea seemed hopelessly distant he came upon a tiny cottage set primly in the middle of a proportionately tiny vegetable garden. A low wooden fence and a swinging gate suggested an attempt at privacy, but David seeing a well in the garden and realizing suddenly how thirsty he was, stopped to peer over the fence.

An old woman was struggling at a rope on the end of which was a bucketful of limpid water.

" Please, ma'am, may I have a drink? " ventured David.

The old woman set the bucket on the edge of the well and squinted suspiciously in his direction.

" Ring the bell if you want to ask me anything," she grunted.

David, somewhat confused, looked around him, and spied, attached to the gate, a bell which he at once rang.

The old woman hobbled towards him. She was not, as David's grandmother had been, erect and

finely dressed, but David instinctively liked her, even though she might have been a witch. Her shoulders drooped and her face was gnarled like the bark of a tree. She wore a big pink sunbonnet with flapping side wings.

"Now, what is it?" she asked in a sour old voice.

David repeated a shy request for water.

"Come in, boy," she said.

He drank the cool water gratefully from a tin cup, while she stood and watched him, nodding her head in a wise reflective way. When he had finished, she began to question him.

"Where do you come from, boy?"

"Wheaton, ma'am," he answered politely.

"Hum!" commented this singular old woman. "Where are you going?"

"To the sea, ma'am," said David.

"You'd better go home," grunted the old woman.

David shifted the little bundle on his back. "I have no home," he said.

"Have you eaten anything since morning?" she stared at him with small suspicious eyes.

"No, ma'am," and he added, lying bravely, "but I'm not hungry."

At this the old woman flew into a temper. "Nonsense — nonsense!" she muttered. "Boys are always hungry. You come right into the house with me."

David followed her meekly.

The little cottage exhaled thrift and neatness. In the kitchen where the old woman led David, the pots and pans shone cheerfully, as if they had just

been scrubbed and polished. Hot water in a kettle purred and steamed over the fire.

David thought it was like the dream cottage to which he had planned, once upon a time, to bring his grandmother. He grew sad again thinking that now there would be no use in his having such a cottage. Life did not seem so sad however, when the old woman, who had been busily hobbling about on mysterious errands, set before him a plate of cold meat, a bit of cheese and a cup of tea. He discovered a healthy appetite and ate ravenously.

"What's the bandage for?" asked the old woman, who had been peering at him fiercely.

David flushed red. "It's a cut."

"Boys always get banged about," she croaked severely.

"It wasn't my fault," said David, and stopped short. He could not tell her about his father.

When he had eaten everything on his plate and had accepted two cups of tea, he stood up and settled his bundle on his shoulder.

"You've been very kind, ma'am. I think I'd better go now," he said.

"Very well," she mumbled ungraciously, and hobbled beside him to the gate. When he reached the road he turned and waved to her. She called to him in a high cracked voice:

"You'd better go home, boy."

But refreshed by the food and rest, perhaps above all warmed by the odd kindness of his late hostess, David resumed his way buoyantly. He had not walked far when benevolent providence with evident

protective intention, sent a good-natured fellow, rattling along in a high cart, with room for two. This jovial person was whistling and cracking his whip. He came up briskly to David who was trudging ahead, his bundle betraying him as a young traveler.

In a moment the sociable driver slowed the burly horse and sang out to the boy:

"Want a lift, youngster?"

With alacrity David clambered up and sat beside his new friend. Running away seemed an easily enough arranged affair, and charitable strangers seemed to have been especially distributed along the road to aid and abet the plans of small determined boys.

Thus it came about that David rode into Tilbury like any young gentleman traveling for his pleasure.

"Where shall I drop you, lad?" inquired his obliging friend, Charlie Crokes.

"Near the ships," said David in a delightful tremor of expectancy.

Charlie Crokes winked knowingly. "Going on a trip for your health?"

"Not exactly," answered David, and looked important.

"How'd you like to be a sailor boy?" sang the light-hearted Charlie Crokes. "Here we are! Climb down, kid. The docks are at the end of the street."

David thanked him gravely and shook hands.

"You're an odd little codger," remarked Charlie

Crokes. "Good luck to you," and grinning sociably, he snapped his whip and was off, leaving David once more alone.

Now the youthful adventurer looked about him somewhat bewildered. The afternoon was well advanced, and the April sun gave chillier light in promise of a cool evening. The houses in the street were pinched side by side in snug even lines. The air exuded salt and a vague stale smell of rotting ropes.

David sniffed at it like a man sampling a new wine, liked its taste and hurried down the street. Here and there a drunken sailor lurched out of a swinging door, bawling some ribald song. Other more respectable people scurried by on various errands. No one paid any attention to David. So with a wide awake look in his gray eyes, unquestioned and with time to spare, he wandered in the direction of the docks. But when at last he reached them, he stood confused by the incoherence of the bustle and noise, the pungent odors of tar and damp, the still keener nearer smell of salt, the soiled leaden color of the water which lapped greedily around craft of various bulks and sizes, the scrape of ropes and hoarse shouting of men. It was a busy hour.

A ship which seemed to David overpoweringly large and which bore in great gilded letters on her bow the legend, *The Jackson,* was being laden for immediate departure to some unknown port. Groups of loafers, their hands in their pockets, as if afraid someone might request manual service of them, with

the critical interest of idlers, watched their fellow-men at work. Tattered urchins discussed importantly obscure matters connected with the ship.

But David after a bewildered and embracing stare suddenly forgot the sea, forgot why he was there and saw only what sent him rapidly forward to join the gaping onlookers. Blanketed and blindfolded a string of horses was being led up a gangplank on to the ship. They were nervous, highly bred beasts and fidgeted and danced upon their way. A beautiful black mare who reminded David so startlingly of Isabella that he could hardly believe it was not she, trembled in every limb, tossed her head wildly and refused the hostler's coaxing guidance. David longed with itching fingers to go and caress her. He was listening with contempt to the ignorant and occasionally brutal suggestions of the loafers who at this chance for the only exercise in which they excelled, gave vent to a scale of humorous and caustic remarks, when they were all suddenly pushed out of the way by a sunny-eyed, broad-shouldered giant who strode up to the perplexed hostler.

"Here, leave her to me."

"It's the trainer," whispered one of the men beside David.

Then David, absorbed in admiration, saw the good looking giant whisper into the twitching pointed ears of the frightened animal, and saw him pat the shivering flanks, until soothed and trusting a friendly touch, the black mare, like a lamb, walked up the gangplank.

David glowed in a necessity of communicative appreciation.

"That chap knows how to manage horses," he remarked to a ragged boy standing near him. The ragged boy was about to reply when a tall lank sailor invested with some authority, swung down the gangplank, and scattered the mixed assemblage like chaff. "Here you, get out. These horses might kick."

David without further hesitation went up to him.

"Please, sir, do you think I might find something to do on this ship?"

The sailor looked down on the boy not unkindly. "Want a job, kid? Go and see the purser." He jerked his thumb toward the lower deck.

"Thank you, sir," said David and politely touching his cap, left the sailor and walked up the gangplank.

Men hurrying in the opposite direction, shoved him aside as if he were a small useless bundle. But he forced his way past them to a man in uniform who leaned against the deck rail.

"Please, sir," asked David timidly, "where is the purser?"

"I'm the purser, lad."

"Please, sir," then continued David, "do you think there's anything I might do on this ship?"

The purser looked him over absent-mindedly. "There's the steward over there, kid. Go and ask him."

So David perseveringly started after a stout red-haired man who was hurrying down the deck at

such a pace that the boy had to run to catch up with him.

"Sir, . . . Sir," he called bravely. The stout man wheeled about. Then, although somewhat out of breath, David recommenced his little speech: "Please, Sir, is there anything I can do on this ship?"

The steward seemed an irascible person. He glared at David and growled: "Can you wash dishes?"

"I can do anything, Sir."

"Well, if you can wash dishes and run errands, I think that's enough for a boy," said the steward. "I'll take you on. Here, boy!" he called to a small rabbit faced child who was scurrying past, and pointed to David: "Rig him out and take him to the cook." Then he turned his back as if definitely relieved of a disagreeable duty.

David looked at the boy who was dressed in a skin-tight little blue suit, short jacket and long trousers.

"Where's the ship going?" he whispered.

The little boy stared at him patronizingly: "Sydney."

David thought of his geography and looked vague. He did not remember about any place called Sydney.

"Please, where is that?" he ventured.

"In the Sandwich Islands," answered his companion contemptuously. With this David was forced to be content. But later he remembered that Sydney was somewhere in Australia.

From the moment he signed as cabin boy and put on the uniform of service, he became a factor of a new and exciting world. The sea no longer represented a vague means to a vaguer end. It was there before him, around him, stretching away in restless shimmer, reflecting the color of a vast sky; it churned and frothed and swirled in gray and green and blue, as it yielded to the cleave of the great ship. Ploughing its way night and day through an apparently trackless expanse of water, this ship claimed David, plunged him ungently into the noises and odors of its life. He was obliged to learn brutal lessons which took no account of his previous gentle training.. He could no longer sleep, eat, wash or pray as his grandmother had taught him to do.

Here was a confusion of strident sounds, the creak of ropes, chug of machinery, the pad of cat-footed sailors, obeying rough oaths and orders; here was the smell of tar, food and damp salt. Here all day long from the ghostly hour when a foul mouthed sailor tumbled David out of his bunk, he ran errands, scrubbed decks, and dishes, dodged blows, ate what was given him served on tin plates as to a young dog — scraps of meat, slabs of cold potatoes, and bitter coffee, until finally, at night, aching and weary, he was permitted to crawl into his bunk which he shared with the rabbit-like boy and a good natured negro called "Ham." But in spite of hardships, David's spirit was unquenchable. He had a will to fight and a readiness to endure.

The duty most distasteful to him was washing

... clung to them thic
the water. The sour smell whicl
from the trough, gave to David a
unsurmountable sensation of na
obliged to roll up his sleeves and
to the elbows in scalding water, and
with a short stick furnished on the
of rope. He never grew accustor
did task.

His happiest hour was at night, v
best he could between the rabbit-like
Joe, and Ham, the little negro, he
asleep, cradled by the lunge and roll
the creak of the beams.

Sometimes the sailors squatting ir
sang, to the accompaniment of a blea
There was something crudely nostalg
rise and fall of their voices. At thi
came furtively sentimental and sang
reminded each man of his home, o
There was one sailor a f...

the little box containing the only treasures he had in the world and which he kept hidden in a pocket of his shore suit. He never thought of his grandmother without remembering Isabella and the fateful ride the day before he left Ghent House. As soon as he became more accustomed to life on the ship, he began to plot how he might visit the mare he had seen on embarking day, who so resembled Isabella.

One day he spoke about her to the little negro, who reluctantly consented to accompany him to the middle hold, with the object of catching a glimpse of that mare.

At sight of the horses David went wild with delight. But Ham, after a cursory peep at them, whispered:

"Golly, if they ketch us we're dead boys," and wriggled away.

David did not even notice that he was left alone. He went towards the horses as to old friends. A tacit instinct of recognition seemed at once established between them. They turned their heads and whinnied. But when he tried to come near to the black mare she pulled away and showed a wicked gleam of eye. Then he spoke to her as he had seen the trainer do, and little by little she surrendered to his advances. Soon he was able to go close to her and rub his nose against her neck and pat her, and at last he fed her with sugar which he had stolen from the kitchen.

From that day David was happy. Nothing now seemed to matter. He no longer minded the bitter

hard work, the dishwashing, the coarse food, the vicious language and occasional blows from careless sailors. He planned his day slyly, so that he might find free moments to slip down to the middle hold and see the black mare. He managed to elude unwelcome discovery until, on his fifth visit he heard voices. Suddenly panic-struck, he snuggled behind the mare. If he were caught, he imagined dire consequences, for Ham had darkly predicted trouble.

"If they ketch you," he had said cheerfully, rolling his eyes and showing his teeth, "they'll put you in irons and p'r'aps pitch you over board," which had sounded suspiciously like a reminiscence from some pirate tale heard long ago, but which, as a possibility, recurred terrifyingly now to David's boyish imagination.

The voices grew more distinct. One was mellow and good-natured and when David who had been quaking with fear, recognized it as the voice of the trainer, he was at once vaguely reassured.

"They're standing the trip well," he said.

"They seem to be," drawled the other voice.

David edged around the mare, wondering if he could not sneak away unseen.

But the big Irishman was among the horses by then, patting them and looking into the stalls.

"Well, Betty," he called when he reached the black mare. Then he saw David. "Here, what's this? What are you doing here, kid?" He spoke sharply.

David came forward and stood before the two

men, his head drooping. He still held in his moist hand a lump of sugar.

Upon seeing the sugar, the trainer's face cleared and he smiled.

"Say, does Betty eat from your hand, kid?"

"Yes, Sir," murmured David and dared look up.

He saw the Irishman's merry blue eyes twinkling. Mr. Crewe, the owner of the horses, a lean, well dressed man wearing much jewelry, examined him kindly.

Then the Irishman stepped forward and put a hand on David's shoulder. "You're all right, kid, if Betty's passed on you. What do you think of that, eh, Mr. Crewe?"

"She doesn't make friends easily," said Mr. Crewe.

"Oh, but they all know me now!" blurted forth David. His eyes were alight with eagerness, he was no longer afraid.

"Funny that he's played around Betty without getting banged about," remarked Dan Sullivan, and stared at David as if taking his measure.

"Well, be careful, boy," warned Mr. Crewe. "Don't monkey around too much. That black mare killed a trainer once."

"I'm not afraid," declared David and looked at Dan Sullivan.

From that day on he vowed a boyish worship for the trainer, and the stolen visits to the horses became doubly worth while.

Sullivan would stroll into the middle hold, and sing out:

"There, kid?" and David would crawl from one of the stalls where he would be hidden. "Here, Sir."

Then like arch conspirators, they would talk in whispers lest the cook or the purser should happen along.

Soon David had told Sullivan his story,— about Ghent House, about his father, his grandmother, even about the blow which had been the cause of his running away.

"Well, kid," said Sullivan wagging his head gravely, at the end of the story, "I ran away from home, too. Now what do you think of that?" Whereupon David was suddenly proud and felt that running away must be the finest thing to do.

But the days were flying by. With a calm sea the ship had made good time. Soon she would dock at Sydney. Then at night, instead of sleeping, weary as he was, David lay between his young bedfellows and thought sadly that Sullivan and Betty and the horses would go away, while he, according to his contract, would have to stay on the ship. He could not imagine life now without Sullivan and the mare. Two days before the arrival at Sydney, Sullivan approached him with some signs of mystery:

"Kid, how would you like to be a stable-boy?"

"I'd like it," cried David quickly.

"Not a word to a soul," cautioned the big Irishman. "Or that purser would raise h—ll. But when the ship lands, you cut and run — hear me? Everybody in Sydney knows the racing stables and everybody in Sydney knows me and Peter Crewe.

You find your way to the stables and ask for me — see?"

"I'll do it," promised David fervently.

The next morning as the ship steamed into the beautiful harbor of Port Jackson, David exchanged a last meaning look and smile with Sullivan. There was preparative noise and bustle on the decks. The small cabin boy was ordered here and there, but his heart was as light as his feet, and while he ran to do everyone's bidding, he kept thinking of Sullivan.

Port Jackson lay beneath a warm blue sky. Boats of all kinds swayed at anchor like resting birds. Indented bays and coves coiled in waves of gray and blue in the morning light, and the prosperous town of Sydney studded the valley. Over all was glisten and shine.

Amid a slide of ropes, shouted orders, sailors running here and there, and a clank of chains, the great ship docked. Then life on the wharf fused with the life of the ship. Sullivan and Peter Crewe went at once ashore. David profiting by the general confusion stole to his bunk, changed into his suit of land clothes and grasping his little bundle stole up on deck near the gang plank, mingling with the crowd. His heart was thumping so loudly that it seemed to him as if everyone must hear it.

The purser was not in sight, nor the steward, nor the cook. So presently seeing a chance he slipped off the boat unperceived.

When his feet touched the wharf he flew, driven by sudden fear that he might be caught.

...ding up a hill, until at
flat plateau overlooking Sydney ai
came to the stables.

CHAPTER III

THE breeze wafted to David's nostrils a faint horsey savor which was pungent and invigorating. In the long low stables there was a brisk come and go of hostlers leading fine capering beasts; of stable boys darting like active imps on different errands. Clockers hunched on fences, bent over their watches, timing the pace of horses which were being jogged on a track in front of them.

David, with sparkling eyes and a light step advanced, as in dreams children enter fairyland. Sullivan was not in sight, but undaunted, the boy walked up confidently to a man of unshaven aspect, who was leaning against a fence, smoking a pipe.

"Please, Sir, is Mr. Dan Sullivan here?" he asked politely.

The surly individual, without removing the pipe from a loose lipped mouth, jerked his head in the direction of a bunch of horses.

Behind them towered the Irishman, a straw hat tilted on the back of his head, a big cigar between his teeth, issuing orders to the stable boys.

In a twinkling David left the man and was off, running towards his friend.

"Hello, kid!" was the trainer's cordial greeting. "Ready for business?"

"Yes, Sir," said David with emphasis and looked

unutterable admiration for his broad-shouldered benefactor.

Sullivan nodded to a hostler, who, as if he had waited for a signal, led up a horse.

"Get on him, kid, and let's see what you can do. Jog him two or three miles. But don't breeze him. He's tired. Know what I mean? Breezing a horse is letting him out. Here, give me that." David handed over the small bundle of his belongings, chirped a ready assent, jammed his cap further over his eyes and with an upward shove from the hostler, sprang on to the horse's back. He was grinning from ear to ear with conscious pride at the opportunity of proving how he could sit in the saddle. At a word from Sullivan he trotted away, his mouth set in a thin serious line, a wrinkle of purpose between his eyes.

He learned afterwards that Sullivan had given him the poorest horse in the stable, but at the time it seemed to him as if he were being entrusted with a grave responsibility. He jogged the obedient animal, conscientiously twice round the training grounds. When at last he came back to the yard, he earned a hearty, "You'll do all right," from the trainer. After that he was given a meal which compensated for the past six weeks of starvation rations on the ship. While he ate, Sullivan stood beside him, evidently pleased at the boy's appetite.

Only when he had finished and heaved a last sigh of digestive content, did the kind trainer seek to divert his thoughts from the empty plates before him.

"Davy."

"Yes, Sir," he became all attention.

Sullivan puffing at the eternal black cigar straddled a chair as if it were a dashing mount, and stared reflectively at his young friend.

"Now listen here, my boy, you start in as a stable lad, but I'm going to make a jockey of you. You've got the stuffing for it, only you must remember that jockey riding is different from ordinary riding." He paused impressively.

David was listening as once he had listened to his grandmother's wonderful tales, his eyes alert and keen, with the look in them of a young intelligent dog learning a lesson.

"Learn to stand up in your stirrups," continued Sullivan. "Hold your knees well in to your horse. Throw yourself forward, hold your reins tight and work up over your horse's neck. You and your horse have got to be one man riding. Never forget that, kid, and you may make a pretty fine jockey."

"Yes, Sir."

"And another thing — keep away from the boys here. If I catch you gambling and playing craps, I'll take your hide off — see?" David nodded solemnly:

"All right, Mr. Sullivan."

The kind Irishman patted him affectionately on the back. "You'll do, kid." And David blushed like a girl at this first compliment.

That night he slept in the stables near the horses. He felt as safe and happy there as an only child

in a crib, guarded gently by jealous parents. He was above all a healthy young animal who had found a comfortable warm home, and who was gratefully ready to work and earn his right to it.

But now the real work began. He was up at half-past four every morning. It was his especial business to exercise the horses and he was happy in this duty.

On these clear May mornings the sky diffused light over the plain upon which stood the stables. Down in the valley spread the roofs of Sydney like slate colored mushrooms; the glassy luster of the Bay was dotted by boats and sails. The country sloped off in smooth freedom. Levels of heaven, earth and water fused to wide expanse of tranquil vernal shine. It was good to be alive and young on such mornings. Sullivan counseled, encouraged the boy and watched over him as if he were his own son. He evidently believed in David as a future jockey. One eventful morning, he even allowed David to jog Betty, the black mare. This was an especial honor. There were few men in the stables who could manage Betty. The boy was exultant. He held the reins lightly and sat forward in his saddle, cradled by the swinging stride of the fine animal, his youth tuned to the rhythm of her pace. Peter Crewe was there that morning, immaculate in a black and white check suit, and negligently holding a cigarette in a hand upon which sparkled a fine diamond ring. He stood beside Sullivan and as the two of them watched David, they whispered together. David acquitted himself honorably of this

test, which he felt to be an important step in his career as a jockey.

Peter Crewe was evidently pleased with the boy, but his carefully expressed praise did not mean as much as Sullivans's "You're getting on fine, kid! I'll take you to town to-day and give you ginger-pop!"

Sydney visited in company with the sociable Irishman presented many fascinating aspects. David felt keenly the privilege of keeping up with the big man's stride and of entering the prosperous town with Sullivan who seemed to know half the population and be known by the other half.

He had never before seen such a big town. Wheaton, of course, had only been a village. He delighted in lingering to stare at the shop windows, and in mingling with the vigorous come and go of men on Key Street. He enjoyed also going to the pool room where men gathered idly, smoking tobacco and talking over races. He was proud to carry Sullivan's bundles, no matter how big or how cumbersome they were. Moreover, there was always the delightful certainty on these occasions that Sullivan, generous as a prince, would treat him to ginger-pop.

But these marks of favor soon began to create an unfavorable impression on the other small stable boys. As a matter of fact, David did not attempt to lessen their grievances against him. He would not consent to be a sly enemy of trainers and join puerile conspiracies against law and order. Nor would he smoke and gamble. In consequence he

soon became an object of juvenile contempt amongst his less virtuous stable companions. This small restless swarm of urchins proceeded to exercise diabolical ingenuity in tormenting him. Since he silently endured their crude sarcasms and their offensive epithets they soon grew bolder.

Among the jockeys there was one in particular, a thin, wiry lad, Jed Thomas, who was Peter Crewe's best jockey, but who seemed to be the evil genius of all mischief and trouble in the stables. He and David were instinctive enemies. One day this Jed Thomas, yielding to illicit curiosity, undertook a cautious investigation of David's belongings. It happened that David came upon the tactless youth in the very act of opening the little box which contained his most sacred treasures. As this box usually lay hidden beneath David's mattress, it was safe to infer Jed Thomas' indiscretion.

He never, however, found out what was in the box. David was on him with the spring of a young panther, wrested the treasure from his raw-boned fist, and knocked him down.

Then, as if by enchantment, the scene of this merited attack became alive with avid spectators. Jed Thomas' friends, bloodthirsty young ruffians, were on the spot in a twinkling, to laud him as a hero, or despise him as a vanquished, broken idol. There seemed for him only one thing to do. This he did with evident reluctance. He stumbled to his feet and lunged forward at David, bullet head downward and hard fists in play. But the usually placid David was transformed into an unpleasant adversary. His

face twisted to a fierce scowl, his eyes snapped lightning. He dodged the older boy's clumsy attack and seemed in return to multiply, to become numberless outraged small boys, closing in on the hapless offender with rapid well-aimed blows, slaps, punches and digs, with crunching fists that obeyed no laws, and were merciless.

Jed Thomas fell, blinded and in yelping pain; David fell upon him, still pummeling. Meanwhile the circle of hungry-eyed onlookers eagerly surrounded the combatants, so as not to miss such a delightful spectacle. Not a hand was lifted to help Jed, who had once been a leader; not a voice raised a protest.

"You don't make me small," gasped David. "You dirty cad . . . you . . ." Here followed a flow of unmentionable epithets.

Only when the irate hero was fully appeased could Jed Thomas slink away, forever branded and disgraced. Had he wished, David could then have claimed the enviable post of leader of the boys. But he sacrificed the opportunity and later even accused himself for this evidence of inherited temper. He was thereby unpleasantly reminded of his father, though to be sure, his rage had been in a worthy cause. He told himself that he should have knocked Jed Thomas down but not half killed him.

He remained repentant for a few days, but other and diverting events soon wafted away the impressions of this disagreeable incident. Dan Sullivan was preparing him arduously for the coveted post of jockey to Peter Crewe.

Morning after morning now, Sullivan took him out with different horses. In a short while he learned the mannerisms of all of Peter Crewe's racers. He learned that at the signal for a race some horses lowered their noses suddenly and plunged; others swerved and flung their heads to one side; still others darted off like arrows. David crouching light and low on his mount, tuned his heart to the pace. There was no music to him like the thumming of hoofs on a track.

Then one eventful day he became a full-fledged jockey and ran his first race. It was a selling race. For the first time he donned Peter Crewe's racing colors. With tight doe skin trousers, and knee boots and cap pulled over his eyes, he stood trig and light and self-conscious as a girl in her first ball dress.

Sullivan hovered about him as anxious as a mother. "How goes it, kid?"

"Fine." David grinned.

He won that race and the horse was sold for over £300. As he slid from the saddle after the race, he hardly felt the ground beneath his feet. His head was reeling, his heart thumping.

He looked around for Sullivan and Peter Crewe, and was sorely disappointed that they had not volunteered expressions of satisfaction after the "weighing in." But Peter Crewe went off to talk to a book-maker and stood at some distance from David pulling at his mustache with a nervous hand. Sullivan though, came up almost at once to the boy and patted him kindly on the shoulder.

"Didn't I do all right, Mr. Sullivan?" asked

David. All the glow and thrill of winning had left him.

"Indeed, you done fine, kid," declared the Irishman; but in some dim way David felt that there were still many things about racing he did not understand. Perhaps he had not been intended to win. He hung his head sadly.

Meanwhile Sullivan went over and spoke to Peter Crewe, who presently strolled up to the boy.

"You rode well, my lad," he said.

David's face brightened. "I did my best, sir."

"Always do your best," said Peter Crewe and passed on.

Now it happened that shortly before the great Derby was to be run, Jed Thomas, who had been expecting to ride in the Derby, Betty, the hope of the Crewe stables, fell into disgrace, by deliberately losing a race for Peter Crewe. David was beginning to realize the subtleties of the track and witnessed calmly the subsequent discharge of Jed,— pondering much, however, thereon,— for without Jed Thomas, Sullivan would be in sore perplexity as to who could and should ride Betty.

For some days Sullivan came and went with evident preoccupation clouding his usual heartiness.

In the boy David's heart grew a thin hardly voiced ambition. He aspired to this one thing — to ride Betty himself in the Derby. He had cherished always a secret contempt for Jed Thomas' skill. He knew that he could manage the mare as Jed Thomas never could manage her. Moreover, even on the ship crossing to Sydney, Sullivan must

have noticed the love between Betty and David. Now whenever David looked at the trainer, there was unspoken wistfulness and suggestion in his eyes, though he dared say nothing.

One morning Sullivan again allowed him to jog Betty. Peter Crewe was there watching and whispering to the Irishman. David acquitted himself splendidly of this trial. Betty seemed to understand and was unusually tractable. Sullivan grunted approval which set David's heart to beating high.

The very next day Sullivan gravely called David aside.

"Mr. Crewe and I have decided, Davy, to let you ride Betty in the race."

"Oh, Mr. Sullivan!" cried David.

The trainer smiled indulgently. "That's what you've been after — isn't it? Well, now Jed's gone, you can step into his shoes, see? But mind, kid, not a word to anyone yet. This is pretty serious business for all of us."

"You can trust me, Sir," said David fervently.

So in obedience to Sullivan, he remained discreet. But gossips exist in stables as elsewhere. In a day, an hour, an instant almost after his conversation with Sullivan he became conspicuous. He denied rumors vainly, with a magnificent assumption of ignorance. But then, a boy stuffed with such a secret, may, without opening his mouth, carry the news written upon his conscious brow, or hidden in a furtive swagger. David felt now that he was somebody, and his manner betrayed a newly acquired importance.

One early morning he came upon Jed Thomas slinking round the outskirts of the stable. Jed, catching sight of him, beckoned mysteriously, and overcoming his dislike, David who felt he could afford to be generous, complied with the clandestine summons.

"I don't bear you any ill-will," began Jed, a wily young scoundrel, "even if you did lick me and take a place what was mine by right. I was a-going to ride Betty. Now it's you."

David looked at him consciously. "I don't know what you mean, Jed."

"Oh, yes, you do," said Jed, slyly winking. "And if you're smart and listen to me, you'll see what a pal I am — how forgiving-like," he dropped his voice to a whisper. "I knows a party, Davy, that's a-dying to meet you. Now what do you think of that!" He chuckled and thrust grimy hands in his tattered pockets. "This party wants to inquire into the health of Betty . . . See?"

David stared at him a moment. "Not from me, you sneaking spy. I might have known you meant no good," he retorted indignantly. "Get out of here now, or I'll call Mr. Sullivan."

"Oh, that's all right, then! I'll go! But you might be civil to a chap," grunted Jed Thomas, and shrugging his shoulders, cast an evil look at David and slouched away.

David decided not to tell Mr. Sullivan of this encounter. He was ashamed to acknowledge that he had spoken to such a bad boy. He had heard tales of bribing jockeys to drug horses, and his honesty

resented fiercely this tentative venture at corruption. Nevertheless he knew that the next time he saw Jed Thomas, he would thrash him until blood came.

Two days later, a few of the older stable boys, after some flattering amenities, managed to coax David behind the stables, where Fatty Cokes, a former friend of Jed Thomas's, produced a package of cigarettes.

"I don't smoke," said David at once resolutely. But being only human, his fingers itched and his mouth watered.

"Say, are you afraid?" sneered the tempter.

"I'm not afraid, but I don't care to smoke," lied David.

"Well, you can't never be a man if you don't smoke," declared the older boy contemptuously, and to prove his words, he struck an evil-smelling match on the sole of his shoe, lit a cigarette and puffed insolent clouds of fragrance into David's face.

"Old Sullivan's got him scared," piped another young Satan.

"He has not," protested David.

"Come now, just to show you're not too proud. Take a whiff. It don't cost you nothing."

The cigarettes were tendered again, and this time David yielded.

"Well," he said weakly, "I tell you I don't like it . . . but just to show you . . ."

He puffed luxuriously, conscious of the new sharp taste of tobacco in his mouth.

Meanwhile at a signal from Fatty Cokes, a small urchin darted away unperceived.

"And maybe now," continued the tempter, "since you're not too high and mighty, you'll have a little game of craps."

"That I won't." This time David's voice was firm.

The craps were on the ground. A few dingy pennies were flipped, whirled and fell.

But David shook his head resolutely.

"Oh, come on," pleaded Fatty Cokes.

At this interesting point, the group suddenly scattered like chaff. Sullivan strode around the corner, nipping the ear of a small tale-bearer. "Now, you damn little sneak, where is he?"

David stood pitifully convicted, holding a half burned cigarette, and with the traitorous craps at his feet, as presumable evidence of flagrant disobedience.

Sullivan's blue eyes flashed. "No better than the others," he thundered. "Smoking and gambling! David, I'd hoped for other things from you!"

"Mr. Sullivan, it's the first time I've smoked, and I swear I wasn't going to gamble," said David, his voice trembling with emotion. He met unflinchingly the trainer's steely gaze. "You know I wouldn't lie to you, Sir. I'm sorry I smoked."

Sullivan's expression softened. "You come along with me," he growled, and without further word or look to the other culprits, he marched David away.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Sullivan," said the boy again. He shuffled dejectedly beside the Irishman, forlorn

in guilty consciousness of having displeased his friend and mentor.

"It was a put up game to queer you, kid," said Mr. Sullivan. "I had my reasons for telling you to keep away from those boys; they're little rotters, Davy. No good comes from them . . . and much bad. You don't know yet, kid, the ins and outs of this racing business. But if you'll listen to the old man, you'll steer clear of trouble. 'Tain't the smoking, boy, that's wrong. It's the company you smoke in."

"I'll never do it again, Sir," promised David.

"I think you won't . . . not before the race, anyway," answered Sullivan grimly.

The next morning he came to David and with the old familiar gesture of trust and affection, put a hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Davy," he said, "the Derby is in two weeks. There's no fooling with that, you know. It's a question of thousands of pounds. Now Mr. Crewe and I trust you; but no one else is to be trusted . . . understand?" He hesitated and cleared his throat: "Mr. Crewe's decided to do something with you that ain't usual, I'll admit, but perhaps he's right, and it's wise. He's going to take you to town to-day, Davy. You're to do exactly as he says."

"He won't send me away?" asked David in sudden terror.

"Not on your life, son," promised Sullivan. "But whatever he thinks best, you do." He smiled queerly. "God bless you, kid. We can't

afford to lose that race. We've got Betty watched like a queen's tiara. And we've got to take care of you. You didn't tell me Jed Thomas has been hanging around?"

The question took David unawares and he blushed scarlet and wriggled. "No, Sir, I thought . . ."

"Never mind what you thought, but you might have told me," said Sullivan. "He was up to no good."

Just then Peter Crewe appeared, strolling across the yard.

David felt very shy. Peter Crewe seemed such a fine gentleman, with his lean, weary face, his perfectly manicured hands, his rings and pins and beautiful clothes.

"Morning, David," he said, nodding and smiling in a cordial way. His affable manner put the boy at his ease and after a few moments' chat he trotted off beside Peter Crewe, almost as confidently as he would have done with Sullivan.

Having accomplished several errands in Sydney, including a visit to the pool room, Mr. Crewe turned to David.

"Now, my boy," he said suavely, "Sullivan and I think it best until after the Derby that you should not hang about the stables. Not that we don't trust you," he added hastily, "but the race is no joke, you understand. The responsibility is a big one for a little lad like you."

"Yes, sir, I know," said David.

"So," continued Peter Crewe slowly, "I have a

house in town, and an old friend living in it, who will take care of you until the race. No one can tamper with you there."

"Is he a racing man, Sir?" asked David.

"It's a she," answered Peter Crewe with faint signs of embarrassment. "It's a she, David."

"Oh! . . ." David's face expressed undeniable bewilderment.

"But you're old enough not to let that frighten you," observed Mr. Crewe pleasantly, as he turned down a quiet side street, David following him. He stopped in front of a two story house, opened the front door with a latchkey and entered, David still at his heels.

A handsome full blown young woman bounded down the stairs and imprinted a loud kiss upon Mr. Crewe's well shaven cheeks.

David stood awkwardly in a corner of the hall, not knowing what to do with his hands and feet.

The young woman was dressed in a turquoise blue flannel wrapper with cascades of cheap lace. Her brown hair of which she seemed to possess quantities, was piled untidily on top of her head.

"Well, Pete," she said in a full and hearty voice. "Thought you weren't coming. Is that the kid? Hello, kid!" and she smiled, showing strong white teeth. David smiled back dubiously, still staring at her.

Peter Crewe nodded. "Yes, Rose. That's the kid. Going to be good to him?"

"Sure!"

She went up to David. "I won't eat you," she

remarked playfully, and David blushed, lowering his eyes.

Then they all three went into a room which seemed to combine the advantages of kitchen and dining-room. Rose bustled around, getting supper ready.

David remained in a corner of the room furtively looking about him; while Peter Crewe lolling back in a rocking chair, lit a cigar and between puffs, talked with easy familiarity to Rose, who seemed a good-natured enough, simple creature. The room was large with a low ceiling. The pots and pans clustered near the oven were clean without that superlative shine aspired to by farmstead housewives. Everything, in fact, was clean, without, however, showing any exaggerated domestic activity. A few posters hung on the walls; a vase of fading roses stood in the center of the kitchen table; on the lower shelf of a china cupboard were piled newspapers and yellow covered books. The supper was good, consisting of chicken, cold potato salad and cheese. Rose waited on her guests first, before sitting at the table with them.

Peter Crewe seemed in high good humor, and he told many stories that made David laugh. Soon the three were on cordial terms and David's shyness had worn away. He began to think that Rose was a very nice woman. She often smiled at him and once laid her hand on his shoulder.

Immediately after supper, Peter Crewe lit a fragrant cigar, took up his hat and kissed Rose good-by.

"Well, my boy, I think you'll be all right," he said genially to David.

Only then did David realize that he was really being left behind. His face fell in such rueful and unflattering eloquence that both Peter Crewe and Rose laughed.

"I'll come for you in time. Don't you worry!" Mr. Crewe assured him. But David saw him leave, with a sensation of dumb, intolerable loneliness.

He sat now drearily in the kitchen while Rose cleared the table and washed the dishes. But she appeared not to notice his gloom, and gradually by artful appeals to his young spirits, by an apparently unlimited stock of funny stories, and above all by sheer good humor, she won his attention and changed his mood. They spent the rest of the evening in pleasant conversation. At ten o'clock, she took him upstairs and showed him his room, which was next to hers. It was a small clean looking room, with a narrow bed, a wardrobe and one chair.

"If you're afraid in the night, call me, dearie," she said.

"Oh, I'm never afraid," boasted David.

But he lay in the strange bed, in the strange room, feeling vaguely restless. He could not sleep, thinking of the woman in the next room, the red and white of her cheeks, the untidy masses of her brown hair, the strapping healthy look of the animal about her.

In what seemed to him to be the middle of the

night, a door creaked. He sat up in bed and listened.

"Are you awake, kid?" It was her voice.

"Yes," he answered. "What is it?"

She came into the room, carrying a candle as she walked. She was still dressed in the blue flannel wrapper.

"I can't sleep either," she said. "Suppose we talk a bit," and she sat on the edge of the bed.

The next morning, he called her Rose familiarly, and followed her around the house, like a playful young dog.

After that time passed rapidly.

Then one day Peter Crewe came to fetch him.

"Well, Davy, are you ready?"

"Yes, Sir, you bet," answered David promptly. He did not mind leaving Rose. His man's instinct had taught him already what kind of woman may be left without sentimental regrets.

But when she bent and kissed him good-by, there was a moist glint in her eyes. "You're a nice kid," she said.

"Good-by, Rose." He kissed her hastily, his mind traveling beyond her to the race of the next day.

As soon as they had left the house, he questioned Peter Crewe.

"How are things in the stable?"

"Betty's in fine shape," answered Peter Crewe smiling. "You and she are going to win to-morrow, aren't you?"

"I think we are," answered David happily.

CHAPTER IV

SULLIVAN strode out from the stables to meet them.

"Well, kid?"

"How are you, Mr. Sullivan?"

It seemed to David as if, after a long voyage, he had come home. He looked alertly at all the familiar objects of the stables and yard.

"What are the odds, Sir?" he asked Sullivan.

"100 to 8 against Betty," the trainer told him. "You've got to win, kid."

"Sure," said David.

That night he dreamed fantastically, that half-boy, half-horse, a youthful centaur, he flew with giant strides over an endless track. He dreamed that he was losing the race, when suddenly his neck began to stretch longer than that of a swan, longer than that of a giraffe, and as it stretched it grew thinner, until it became a fine thread which spun away ahead of other straining horses. A weird crowd shrieked: "Won by a neck . . . by a neck!"

Beneath him the track seemed to whirl and canter carrying his body after his head. But the neck was brittle and broke in two before the body could join the head. He woke in a cold shiver to find Sullivan standing over his narrow bed.

"Wake up, kid. Having a nightmare, weren't you?"

Life in the stables quickened and throbbed. The sun already high, spilled light over the paddocks, over the plain, over the Harbor below. The air was like filtered gold; the sky a limitless blue track over which skimmed small clouds.

Betty was led out, a fine nervous animal, with nostrils dilating as if she smelt the race, and wild eyes. David laid his cheek against the gloss of her neck. She turned her head as if trying to see him, and he called her softly by name.

But Sullivan, severe in his discipline that morning, soon interrupted the friendly communion between boy and horse.

"Come now, kid, no fooling. . . . You're not to jog her, but let's see how she feels."

David jumped lightly on her back and cantered off, Sullivan standing near the fence, watching.

"How does she go?" shouted he, as David passed.

"Sure thing we'll win!" exulted David.

Later in the morning, Peter Crewe, paler than usual, more drawling of voice, sauntered up to the boy and presented him with a new jacket and cap of orange and black, his racing colors. This tangible insignia of the occasion roused David to a sharp consciousness of his importance. He felt suddenly the spirit of fealty of a knight ready to don armor and stalk to war for his lord.

Meanwhile from all directions of the countryside, people began to straggle towards the field. As the hour advanced, the uneven stream of them grew thicker. Men, women and children, on foot, on

horseback, in vehicles, trudged, trotted and rattled up the roads and over the plains as far as could be seen. Their faces turned in a single direction, they trooped excitedly forward, in cohesive masses of color, upon which the sun beat molten brass rays. As they neared the track they flowed to more compact patterns which swirled and eddied in circles. A hum arose as from a swarm of brilliant insects.

The field was festively arrayed with fluttering banners, gay playthings of the breeze. A brass band struggled loudly against the hubbub. The grandstands looked top-heavy with spectators. Sliding in and out of the shifting throng, shrill voiced vendors cried their wares of lemonade, oranges, sweets and popcorn. There was the insistent whine of greedy children tugging at their mothers' skirts. In the betting ring were shrewd eyed, suavely persuasive book-makers, and swaggering men in check suits, their hats cocked at a knowing angle, gathered to discuss the odds. Dust rose in suffocating fumes, from the trampling of many feet; stifling vapors of heat exuded from the crowd as it packed itself in dense masses beneath an azure and placid sky.

There were two races before the Derby. Sullivan, who at first had remained his cool cheerful self, grew more and more nervous and irritable. David wandered about the fringe of the throng, with mingled sentiments of pride at the part he was presently to play for its profit and loss, and of wistfulness at sight of various alluring refreshments tendered invitingly within reach of eyes and nose. He

had not a cent in his pocket and he was after all very much of a normal boy. Once he approached Sullivan timidly.

" Please, Mr. Sullivan, I'd like to have a bottle of ginger pop."

Whereupon the usually generous Irishman answered abruptly, " You'll have no bottle of ginger pop until the race is run, my boy."

At this decided refusal of an innocent wish, David looked surprised and glum; but soon forgot such trivial matters in the momentous necessity of donning his jockey's togs. Sullivan came into the dressing room with him and while he slipped into the little new orange and black jacket, the trainer hovered about him with awkward tenderness, abusing him as a strong man abuses an animal he loves. Then when at last he stood bravely attired in Peter Crewe's racing colors, Sullivan put a hand on his shoulder and the two, man and boy, faced one another.

" Kid, the time's come," said the Irishman, his voice deep with feeling. " Now listen! This race means a lot to us. I want you to win it. Remember. Don't get pocketed. Force yourself up without shoving anybody. If you can, in the getaway, try to be the outside horse. . . . Mind now, the outside horse of the first six horses, so you can sprint. Then go like the devil . . . God bless you! " He let go of David's shoulder and wheeled suddenly.

" Come on."

David was not afraid, but he felt as in a dream as he followed Sullivan out to the paddock, where

men seemed to spring about him from everywhere, discussing, commenting and joking, in a confusion of sound. Betty was waiting for him!

The next thing he knew, he was in the saddle, walking around the paddock, a hostler leading Betty. Then the gate was opened and the rest was a blur of mingled sensations. He sat lightly in the saddle, his nerves fused to a single wire that seemed to bind him to Betty, making boy and horse one sentient ripple of movement. As he walked by the grandstands he heard a muffled sound of voices, and felt thousands of eyes fixed upon him; he saw other horses beside him, saw vaguely other figures of jockeys in violent colors, saw upturned faces that swelled or shriveled like comical rubber masks, heard hoarse murmurs that rose and brushed by him as he made his way to the starting point.

One man, thrown forward by the crush, reared unnaturally tall beside Betty's head. His mouth was open, he was saying:

"There goes a pippin!" Then as if he had been pulled back fastened to a string, he sank into the crowd again.

David was conscious next of being pushed and pulled in line at the starting post, with the track stretching ahead.

The starter, who was a friend of Sullivan's and who had always exchanged cheerful looks and words with David, sang out:

"Going to do it, kid?"

Then as if a magic spell had been broken, David awoke vividly to the moment.

He looked at the starter and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Surer than H—ll!"

The flag was lowered, they were off, and it was a good start.

Betty skimmed forward, an easy fifth. David let her choose her pace. There was no urge as yet, in his hands and body.

The long stride of the mare was like nothing else, a strainless advance towards a goal.

Then the horse ahead flew faster. The race became a tense rivalry of skill and speed, in which a common pulse beating in animal and man, drove each forward madly in single blind ambition. The jockeys slanted forward, lay on the necks of their horses, whispered, and coaxed with their necks, their shoulders, their arms and knees. Eyes strained ahead, bodies followed the eyes. All fused into lines that rippled, that stretched, that doubled flexibly, in a pounding rhythm of pace. Muscles worked smoothly as if oiled. The earth and sky shrank to a track that wound in a hair, a thread, a ribbon, a tape, a plain of different width to each vision.

David kept his wits clear as daylight, his nerves firm as steel. He was creeping ahead. Yet to himself he hardly seemed to move, except for the tails and flanks and blurred colors and r cks left behind him.

Betty was second for a furlong. The first horse was a long lithe limbed gray who ate up space. But David was on the rail, and had the inside of the track. Betty leapt, bounded and flew, her hoofs

hardly touching the ground. She reached the haunches of the horse ahead, and like a very streak of wind, tore past and took the lead.

The yells of the crowd rose in coils of hoarse and tangled clamor that cracked like giant whips over the heads of the horses. Noise rolled and splashed on to the track; serried masses swayed with upturned faces that stared and grimaced and wavered as in a diffused pulp; handkerchiefs waved like tiny white flags; an anguished expectancy bound together men and women.

The gray crept up. David felt the lean eager head pushing, pressing, insisting behind him — parallel to him.

He bent to Betty's ear and whispered love words, sobbed, swore, prayed. She heard him and winged faster. Now they were less than a hundred feet from the wire.

David pleaded with all his soul and body, willing Betty to a final magnificent effort. Then as in his dream her neck seemed to stretch, grow longer, thinner, almost brittle, passed the wire and shot on as if it would never stop.

Suddenly it shrank back into place again.

After a wild, whirling drunkenness, everything seemed to cease abruptly. Then into the daze crashed a roar from thousands of throats, mounting wide and uncontrolled. Feet came running, heads were thrust forward, the crowd seemed a dismembered, hysterical confusion of arms and bodies. Women cried, men shook one another's hands and clapped one another on the back.

David sat in the saddle, shaking and bewildered. He had won the race. Sullivan was there, weeping like a baby. "You done it, kid . . . you done it."

Peter Crewe, very pale, was there and seizing his hand wrung it and kept on wringing it until the fingers felt like rags. He was saying, "I'll never forget it, David . . . never."

Then a lump as big as a nut sailed into the boy's throat, sitting there in the saddle he felt his face contract like a bit of putty squeezed in a giant hand. He put his grimy fists to his eyes and began to whimper.

"Poor, dear child," cried a woman.

"There, kid . . . there."

"He's tired, the little 'un."

"Let him alone."

"How young he looks."

The crowd, maternally inclined, surged around Betty and himself, patting the mare and expressing admiration for the boy.

But now Peter Crewe very gravely took Betty by the bridle and led her before the Judge's stand. David sat straight like a little soldier, and touched his cap to a kind old gentleman who smiled in a friendly way.

Then Peter Crewe, still leading his mare, walked into the enclosure, where Sullivan, loud voiced and joyous, waited.

There David was allowed to dismount and unsaddle Betty. Next carrying his saddle, his girth and surcingle, he went to be "weighed in."

Then before he knew what was happening, a huge

horseshoe of flowers appeared. Sullivan lifted him and sat him in the hollow of it. He grew very red in the face and began to grin. The crowd swarmed beneath him, whooping and cheering; eyes were friendly; teeth showed in smiles. He was borne forward in triumph. The smell of heat and people rose acridly, mingling with the strong sweet smell of flowers.

At last he was lifted down from his floral mount, and surrounded again. Strangers thrust money into his hand, which at first he refused. But Sullivan, standing jealously behind him, whispered: "Take everything coming to you, kid."

So he opened his fists, shoved the offerings into his pockets, and losing shyness, answered glibly questions put to him, smiling now, even tolerating kisses from unknown females.

When the excitement was over and he was allowed to breathe, released from the embraces of women and the hearty, more tangible generosity of men, Sullivan turned to him laughingly:

"You can have that ginger-pop now, son," he said.

CHAPTER V

THE Derby put five thousand dollars into David's pockets, which was a large sum for a boy of thirteen. But after the first natural exultation over his good fortune, he displayed unsuspected sobriety concerning his new estate as a capitalist.

It was as if a portion of irresponsible boyhood had dropped from him forever. He felt a man.

Said Sullivan the day after the race: "What are you going to do with all that money, kid?"

David puckered his brows: "I hadn't thought."

The Irishman chewed reflectively the end of a big black cigar. "You know I love you, kid, as if you were my own son," he said at last.

"I don't know what I'd done without you, Sir," answered David fervently.

Sullivan dismissed the boy's gratitude with an expressive wave of his large hand. "That's all right . . . and only natural. But now listen, kid, I'm not going to hang around here any longer. That's what I want to talk to you about."

David looked at his friend in dismay. He had never supposed that Sullivan would leave Peter Crewe, any more than that he, David, would wish for change in his present life.

The trainer removed the cigar from between his teeth and slowly flicked off a long ash.

"Yes, I'm going to America, kid. Want to come with me?"

"To America?" David's eyes opened wide.

Sullivan confidentially lowered his voice.

"I mean it, son. Now look here. Mr. Crewe's got his eye on you. He's going to try and make you sign a contract for some years. But don't you do it."

"I wouldn't sign any contracts," cried David, "not if you weren't going to be here, Mr. Sullivan."

"You come along with me then," said the Irishman. "You're the right stuff for the States. I'm not telling you that Mr. Crewe isn't square enough, but . . . well, there isn't anything in it for you. Take my word. Tell you what I'll do," he puffed clouds of slate-colored smoke skywards and stared at David. "Tell you what I'll do. You've your little pile. You come along with me to California, see? I'll put you in school. A man that's going to amount to anything has got to have education," he mouthed the word with respect. "I never had any to speak of. But a man's better for it. After you have schooling I'll see that you get plenty of horses. What do you say to that?"

David, who had listened with rapt attention, answered promptly:

"I'll go with you, Mr. Sullivan."

"Shake on it." The Irishman took David's small brown hand in pump handle grip, adding, "You'd better let me do the talking to the boss about this affair."

David gladly agreed, wondering a trifle compla-

cently what Peter Crewe would think of losing at once his trainer and his best jockey.

That same afternoon, as he was standing in the yard watching Mercury, a promising yearling, being led out of the stables, Peter Crewe strolled up and said cordially.

"Sullivan tells me you are going to America. Sorry to lose you, David, but you must do as you think best."

David responded with perfect sincerity: "I'm sorry to leave you, Mr. Crewe. You've been very kind to me."

He did not, however, realize the importance of his decision until the very day of sailing. Then suddenly it came upon him that he was leaving a life he had loved, leaving the stables, leaving Betty, leaving Peter Crewe, and that he would probably never see any of them again. This made him a little sad. But after all he was going away, not alone this time, as a forlorn outcast, but with his friend, Dan Sullivan, to a new country where he could make his way, where he could even perhaps some day own a racing stud. There was the thrill of adventure, of the unknown, of faith in himself.

Hardest of all now was leaving Betty. He went alone to say good-by to her. She greeted him like an old friend, and fumbled in the direction of his pockets on a feminine hunt for sugar. David had come prepared with delicacies. He fed her sadly and laid his cheek against the silk of her neck, whispering: "Good-by, old girl."

She seemed to understand, and turned her head

and looked at him with dark melancholy eyes. He could not bear the look, murmured vague promises of return and hurried away, lest he lose his man's armor and find himself a whimpering boy.

But the excitement of departure, other and less poignant farewells, the bustle and noise of embarking and the cheerful company of Sullivan, buoyed him over and past a frail bridge of regret. Peter Crewe was on the quay, waving good-by. David stood on the upper deck of the ship, leaning against the railing, and dry-eyed, watched the gleaming Harbor, the undulating lines of coves and bays, the shores of Sydney recede to elusive blurs and dissolve into ether of memory. The sea tumbled in wild scatter of foam, and stirred in sluggish rolls of opaque green, as the great ship cut passage forward.

"Well, d'you want to go down in the kitchen and wash dishes?" joked Sullivan.

"Not much!" cried David.

He did not need to be reminded of his first voyage. The ship seemed familiar enough to him, with agreeable difference of situation. He could afford now to recognize the smells of tar and cooking, the cat-footed tread of sailors, the chug of engines and the swabbing of decks and the scurrying back and forth of cabin boys.

He and Sullivan were traveling in state, with two cabins and a private bathroom and parlor.

The days swam by in lazing and in planning a future. There were pleasant people on board; but he and Sullivan avoided, by tacit consent, the con-

fining society of shapeless females mummied in rugs and veils, who were ready at the slightest encouragement to make a pet of David and to coquet with Sullivan. The genial Irishman was more at home in the smoking room, where surrounded by appreciative audiences, he treated to drinks, told good stories and quickly became an undisputed leader in anecdote and humor. David, content to remain in the shadow of popularity, lounged beside him, and would also have smoked and played poker, had Sullivan permitted such close mimicry of men's ways.

Sometimes, late in the evenings, when the ship's lights glared dwarfish rivalry to ripe orchards of stars, when somber blue shadows painted the sea, when space of sky and water, dusky, impenetrable fused into night, Sullivan with fitful gleam of cigar tip, would lean elbow to elbow with David against the railing, and the two would stare ahead as if already they sighted land. Then while from behind them in the garish salon issued sounds of music and chatter of women, Sullivan talked to the boy as man to man.

He told David tales of his own boyhood, of adventures and narrow escapes and periods of discouragement.

"Kid, I've often reached the jumping off place," he said once solemnly. "But I never jumped, and I'm still in the saddle and racing to win."

Sometimes also David spoke of Ghent House, and of his grandmother. He even tried to remember tales of chivalry she had told him, sitting on the stone bench under the old elm tree.

"She was a wonder, Mr. Sullivan," he would say, and Sullivan nodding gravely, chewing at the end of his cigar, would answer:

"Nothing on God's earth like a good woman, Davy."

Apart from his mother and grandmother, who lived in shrines of their own, David had not yet considered women as factors in life. Peter Crewe's Rose, of course, belonged to a special class over which, he as a boy, reflected but little, and that with unsubtle masculine contempt.

Therefore Sullivan's dictate: "Nothing on earth like a good woman, Davy," became untried gospel, to be laid aside as a secret conviction. But for the moment David thought only of some time owning horses, and of being big and broad-shouldered like Sullivan.

Then one day, like a lustrous fruit mellowed by the sun, California loomed golden against the sky.

That solemn inexpressible thrill at approach to strange shores, that quiver of expectancy, and shine of the eyes and beat of the heart which transforms men into pilgrims, which on the threshold of a goal, seizes and holds them still for a moment with a mysterious prescience of failure and success, now came to the boy David Ghent and stirred his blood to tremulous speed. The young country welcomed him, claimed him as one of its own.

The ship sailed slowly past the rocky Farallones Islands, through the Golden Gate, past Fort Point and Point Bonita and the Presidio. Quarantine delayed her progress between Fort Mason and Alca-

traz Island, upon which stood the federal prison. Then at last, in a bustle and confusion she docked.

David stepped lightly ashore.

"My! It's fine here," he whispered to Sullivan.

"You haven't begun to see it yet," said Sullivan.

"I think I know," insisted the boy.

They went to the Palace Hotel. David had never before seen such a hotel and trotted in awestruck admiration at Sullivan's heels, through the wide court to the elevator and up the soft carpeted corridors to his room whose windows looked out upon the court.

There being no immediate question of his going to school, the next few days whirled past in a succession of bewildering sensations.

It was June. Life in San Francisco still simmered, although many people had gone to the country. The city rose from fogs in the morning, basked in transient sunshine and sank into misty damp again in the evenings. To David everything was magic, a kaleidoscopic impression of luxuries beyond his imagination, which luxuries moreover suggested tangible possibilities to his nascent ambition.

He liked lounging in a comfortable armchair in the hotel court and watching hour in and hour out, the drift of a motley stream as he listened to the discordant murmur of hotel machinery; he liked sitting in the barroom and staring at the many types of men who came there; but best of all he liked wandering down the streets and losing himself among the thickly threaded confusion of people and vehicles, all gadding their separate ways.

He became conscious of a scale in humanity, of a mysterious sorting and division of values graded into degrees of decorativeness and utility.

The men who commanded, the women who were most ornamental, clove swiftest path through the throng. David grew to recognize them, the men by the masterful push of their shoulders, the women by their smiles and indolence.

Just as young boys gape at bright uniformed soldiers, investing them with all the virtues of courage and importance, and dream of some day earning rank among them, so now David stared at the fine seeming show, attributing to it qualities corresponding to its appearance, longing to be in and of it. Sometimes he hazarded comments to Sullivan, which showed clearly the trend of maturing thoughts.

One day, following with appreciative eyes the graceful passage of a willowy blonde woman down the hotel hall, he remarked:

"My! she's a winner!"

The wise Irishman growled in reply: "She's a spender. Keep away from that flowery innocent kind, Davy. You can't trust 'em."

But this display of skepticism did not convince or please David.

"You don't know," he said.

Sullivan looked at him intently. After this the Irishman tried to direct the boy's attention to instructive sights. Together they visited Chinatown, where the secretive Orientalism offering itself just so far to strangers' eyes, where the aromatic smells, the stale odor of cooped up yellow men, the furtive

patter and slide of their small feet, in and out of the narrow streets, interested David more than Cliff House, more than the Presidio or the gardens, more than anything else in San Francisco.

He was intelligently eager to see and learn. But when Sullivan mentioned school, he encountered in the boy unexpected reticence.

School now represented to David a step backward to the acknowledged ignorance of boyhood. His impatience swerved from a calculated waste of time. He wanted boldly to take his place among men and to claim a share of power. To him power meant not book-learning, but money. The comforts of the hotel, the fine buildings in the streets, the amusements of the city, the pretty women, all these things represented wealth. America meant wealth. He must have money to live in America.

About this time he met in the barroom of the Palace Hotel, a man who called himself Jake Williams.

The barroom harbored a select assortment of masculine types, from idlers without labeled profession, to clean shaven imposing gentlemen who minded their own business and apparently had business to mind, who drank among themselves and who did not linger over empty glasses.

Jake Williams belonged rather more to the former class. He was a sociable man and fascinated David by a facile flow of language and a lurid treasure trove of anecdote connected with mining and miners. He owned an imposing collection of gold ore samples, claimed by him to be irrefutable proofs

of vast ripened fortunes within reach of enterprising capitalists. He sold mines and stocks in mines; he would have sold his samples of ore. He was a faithful frequenter of the bar, but although he was ever ready to talk, he found few attentive listeners. Once he spoke to David. Grateful for the boy's interest, he thereafter obligingly spun yarns of adventure. He described mines as cakes full of plums, as trees full of fruit which fell at a shake from the hand, as oysters full of pearls, in fact as the only infallible methods of getting rich quickly in this deceptively prosperous world.

Jake Williams wore many jewels. He smoked evil smelling pipes, drank mixtures of his own invention, gnawed coffee beans, with ravaged remains of tobacco-stained teeth, and used pomade on an already greasy quality of black hair.

Sullivan loathed him. But David was never tired of listening to him.

"And all you do, young sir, is to stroll along a babbling river and pick up a handful of sand, shake it in a pan, and find gold, or if you prefer," he accentuated his words with wise shakes of the head, "or if you prefer, you can try copper. In course that's a different proposition, but not so bad neither."

"Which is the best?" asked David eagerly.

"That depends," answered the sagacious expert on mines. "Some likes gold, some likes copper, and some likes silver and so on . . ." To listen to him one would have thought that it was only a matter of choice for a man.

Now these conversations bore fruit in that Da-

vid's imagination veered from horses to mines. He began to think that mines must be the more lucrative as a profession. Accordingly he questioned Williams very closely, but always when Sullivan was not around.

The result of it all was that David decided one fine day that he would be a miner. His newly directed activity took no account of the importance of such a decision.

Only the moment came when he had to tell Sullivan of the change in his plans.

He went to the kind Irishman with some misgivings and pricks of conscience. Sullivan, of course, had hoped to make of him a famous jockey, and David wondered uncomfortably how much of a disappointment he would be inflicting on his friend. But it did not occur to him to abandon his new scheme.

He picked up courage and spoke of it to Sullivan one morning when they were sitting in the Irishman's bedroom, while Sullivan smoked an after-breakfast cigar.

David perched on the bed, stared at the smoke as it drifted heavily towards the ceiling.

"Dan, I've got something to tell you," he began at last.

The Irishman did not lift his eyes from the fitful glow of his cigar.

"Go ahead, kid."

"I've been thinking that I won't take time off for school," said David.

"I expected as much," was Sullivan's calm reply.

"But I don't want to be a jockey either — not yet," blurted out David.

At this the trainer's keen blue eyes darted piercing question.

"Why not?"

"Well, I'm interested in mines."

The Irishman clapped a hand boisterously on his knees and began to laugh.

"In mines? And are you thinking of buying any, my boy?"

David frowned seriously.

"Honest, Dan, I mean it. I'd like to try mining. I kinder think I'd get along quicker."

The Irishman bent forward. His face grew very grave.

"Why, Davy, this is a bit of a surprise."

"I didn't say anything until I was sure. But I've been thinking of it," David said. "There's mines in the Sierras, Dan, I'd like to go there."

"You got those fancies from your friend Jake, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"D——" swore Sullivan.

"Oh, Dan, I hope you won't take it badly," cried David, for he saw that the kind Irishman's face had grown somber as he puffed furiously at his cigar.

There was a silence.

David felt uncomfortable and sad. He had not realized how hard it would be.

"Do you really mean it, lad?" said Sullivan at last.

"I really do," answered David bravely.

"I won't say it isn't a disappointment," continued Sullivan in a wistful voice. "I . . . I've grown mighty fond of you, David. I'd kind of counted on keeping you near me. But I suppose you've a right to change your mind. Each man's got to do the best he can."

"Oh, Dan!" cried David, slipping from the bed and coming over to his friend. "If you say the word I'll give it up." His eyes smarted and his throat felt curiously dry.

Sullivan put out a big, kind hand and patted him on the back. "No, boy . . . no. It isn't Dan who'll stand in your way," whereupon he cleared his throat with a fine attempt at cheerfulness. "Well . . . well, what would old Betty think!"

"It's only to try, you know," said David. "If it doesn't work out, I'll be back, Dan."

"There'll always be a place for you," said the Irishman and suddenly rising to his full splendid height, threw away his cigar and looked down at David. "Things never turn out the way we plan in this world," said he; "go ahead with your mines, kid."

"I'll not forget how kind you've been to me, Dan."

"Why, I love you, son," said Sullivan.

Never once did he in the following days of preparation show emotion that might have influenced the boy. On the contrary, he entered now heart and soul in the boy's new plans, even urging speedy fulfillment of them. "There's no use your hanging around here any longer," said he.

He gave David one bit of advice. "Don't take all your money with you, kid."

So David placed his little capital safely in the Wells Fargo Bank, and only kept out fifty dollars for immediate use.

After much deliberation in which this time Jake Williams did not take part, Sullivan less optimistic than David, advised him to try a copper mine in a place called Stone Valley, Calaveras.

"Don't think you're going to prance into the business, my boy, and get rich like your friend Williams told you. This seems a likely enough mine. Anyhow, you can go and have a look," he told David.

Therefore it happened that one day, with a small valise for baggage, and fifty dollars in his pocket, David set off for Stone Valley. He bade Sullivan good-by, with no more outward form or sentiment than a firm loyal handclasp. But between the men lay unspoken faith and love.

"So long, Davy, my boy," said Sullivan. "I'm off to New York in a day or two. If there's anything ever I can do, remember I'm your friend."

"Good-by, Dan. I'll remember. The same here."

The blue eyes and the gray eyes met in clear affectionate leavetaking.

"God bless you," said Sullivan.

As the train, with a shriek and whistle that ripped the air, chugged slowly out of the great station, David, his face pressed against the car window, saw the big Irishman standing fair and honest,

smiling at him, a brave specimen of a man, and all that remained nearest and dearest in the boy's life.

Then the train purred and spat and crawled away with accelerating noise. Sullivan's kindly smile became blurred and was gone.

So it was that David Ghent, alone, as many other men had been before him, went to the virgin elements to seek power.

CHAPTER VI

STONE VALLEY clung protected and disdained at the foot of a mountain. The Sierras reared unhewn, awesome battlements above the puny intruder. Like chiseled and frozen sea-waves, mounting to gaunt peaks foamed with snow, they stretched away, infinite, immeasurable and desolate, brooding beneath the unhaunted grandeur of primordial peace. Wastes of firs and pines bristled like somber-hued guns from pinnacled fastness. Blasted trees lay withered and black with decay in the blue shadows of fantastically shaped bowlders. Scarred cañons plunged in sudden pits of gloom, and sprawling mountain streams cut steep paths through rocks. In summer a span of intense still blue floated overhead; in winter the sky shriveled and grew bleak. Snow drifted down in ghostly silence, mantling with ice the summits, the jutting buttresses, the wild ravines and mountain slopes. Then all was fused in pathless harmony.

To this majestic world, in which nature had decreed eternal dissolution and evolution of virgin elements and a march of giants through ageless cycles of change, there came man, audaciously working his path into the very sanctuary of chaos, there to settle and to cope with hitherto dominant forces.

Stone Valley clung like a leech to the foot of a

mountain, and through all seasons throve, pursuing its precocious purpose, burrowing, sucking, digging into the pith of earth, exploring its vitals to steal from it illusive gold. Gold meant power and for power men sweated and labored tirelessly.

David Ghent came to join these men; but in the beginning, as was fitting he took place among the least of them.

He had much to learn. Life and work in the Stone Valley mine was grim. Hunks of gold did not lie like eggs to be picked up and carried off in baskets.

But the shaft mine with its fruitful wound, its dark workings, its great net of man-made scaffoldings, represented to David a tangible struggle for wealth. He gloried in this rough contact with essentials, and became at once an ardent willing part of labor and danger, serving hard apprenticeship so that he might win a coveted place among men.

He was employed first as a powder monkey, which meant that to him and to nine other boys was given the perilous duty of clambering up scaffoldings of the great chamber, carrying to the miners water and black powder and dynamite.

Powder-grimmed, agile and quick of eye, he discovered prehensile instincts, and fearlessly scrambled up two hundred feet stopes. For this he earned a dollar twenty-five a day, saved the dollar and with clear conscience hazarded the 25 cents in thrilling games of craps.

He lived with miners and muckers herded in a mammoth bunk house. He slept as best he could,

and ate what was thrown to him. His appetite was not fastidious, and he accepted like a young animal, the hunks of meat, stale pie and cheese which formed his daily fare. He fitted snugly enough into this new kind of existence, and when he was not working, sleeping or eating, he was imitatively smoking, chewing, swearing, wrangling and gambling in congenial company of the powder monkeys. There was no kind Sullivan beside him to control and direct. He must protect himself. But he had no time to miss Sullivan.

Although the miners cursed at him playfully, aimed occasional rocks and kicks in his direction, he found them easy-going good hearted children, with strangely soft eyes and gentle mouths. It was as if living so close to nature they had become a part of it, inheriting its cruelty and its large-handed generosity. Physically they seemed sculptural fragments of earth and rock. Their bodies were rudely carved and solid, their faces rugged and brown or red. Their walk was a cross between a lope and a slouch like furry inhabitants of primeval forests. They came from all parts of the United States. Many of them were prodigal sons without hope, however, of some day feeding on the Biblical fatted calf; others were rovers with the fever of adventure in their veins; still others, stolid, uninspired workers who tapped at mines like woodpeckers at trees. There were also spendthrifts, shrewd-eyed future millionaires, a few very bad men with impulsive shooting irons . . . and Father Dunlap.

Father Dunlap was a Canadian priest who had

come to Stone Valley, unasked, unwelcomed, but who was soon to be loved and respected by every man and boy in the mine. He was a friend to the shift bosses and superintendents who lived with their wives in private tents and were waited on by Chinese servants, just as he was a friend to the men who lived in the mammoth bunk house. No being was too abject, too low or too crude for his tender good will. Stone Valley surrendered to his quiet influence and trusted him.

He threaded his path among men, a soberly black clad figure, in stature a giant, in bearing like a noble oak tree. His face was candid and serene, his brow thoughtful, his chin square. He smiled like a child and talked like a philosopher. He preached cleanly ambition, honest toil, strength and patience. To those who would read, he lent books which opened doors to worlds of thought and action.

David did not speak to him for a long time, although he had often smiled sweetly at the boy, as if in promise of future friendship.

But one summer day, two months after David's arrival in Stone Valley, he was wandering up the mountain on a solitary excursion after birds, when suddenly in a clearing, he stumbled upon Father Dunlap, seated on a fallen red-wood tree, reading from a holy book.

The spice of pines and firs drifted and rose in tepid fumes; the sun slanted through the wood and coaxed color from the black garments of the priest.

It was a cloudless day. The mountain bloomed in shy wild splendor. The bowlders seemed giant stem-

less flowers; streams tinkled limpidly, clumps of frail pink and white laurel gleamed from hoary crevices. A tremor of heat beat muffled like a distant drum.

Father Dunlap, at the rustle of branches stirred by David's foraging hand, lifted up his head, saw the boy and smiled.

"Good afternoon," he said.

David grinned answer, and trod into the clearing. He had learned the slope shouldered gait of the miners. His felt hat shading his eyes, his head thrust forward, his hands in his pockets, he stood looking down at Father Dunlap.

"Fine day," hazarded the priest, surveying David with friendly interest.

"Yes, it is," answered David.

"I have seen you often, my boy," said Father Dunlap.

"I guess you have." David edged nearer and became suddenly confidential.

"My Mother was a Catholic."

"Was she now?" Father Dunlap's face lighted as at a piece of good news. "And you, my boy?"

David fumbled in the earth with the toe of a boot. "Oh, me! . . . I'm not anything special."

Father Dunlap looked grave for a moment. "That is a pity . . . a great pity!" he said gently, then recovering his child-like smile he motioned to a place beside him on the fallen tree.

"Sit down, won't you?"

David slid to the ground and leaned his back against the trunk of a red-wood tree. The priest closed his holy book.

Then in this quiet shrine of the Sierras, David found himself talking long and intimately with the good man, and a great friendship came from this talk.

Father Dunlap was wise and simple. He looked mildly on the passions of men, knowing their hearts as he knew the names of birds and trees. He shared their aspirations, divined their discouragements, gloried in their victories. He preached a gospel of universal kindness, which signified highest brotherhood with God. He unfolded this gospel to the boy David with ingenuous eloquence.

It became a familiar sight in Stone Valley on bright afternoons, to see the tall black clad figure of the priest pacing up the steep winding path which led away to the woods; beside him David, lithe and ardent; the two in close converse.

Father Dunlap was shaping David to be a good American citizen. To this end he rehearsed, in form of heroic tales, the brave history of the United States. As on a large bold canvas, he traced in a few strokes the chief figures of leaders among men, of men who had risen from virgin soil, rugged of brow, honest of heart, who blazened the cause of freedom and honor in this new-blooded world. He sang the great blank verse song of America, the song of fruity lands from which history was to grow as a patriarchal tree. He described the struggle of pioneers, the quickening of civilization where there had been waste. He prophesied in strong phrase the future ascendency of the self-made man. He talked as one who sees a vision of a united,

magnificent nation carved by its own hands, too big of heart to be petty of mind. Room for all, work for all, duty for all, in this nation.

He filled the boy's imagination with pictures of men like Washington, like Lincoln, like Grant.

He spoke also of women who with dauntless spirit and faith had inspired husbands, fathers and sweethearts to fight and make peace, to till the soil and build houses and govern wisely.

"David, never forget that nations are born from women," he said once. "And never forget that you are part of a nation."

David nodded his head solemnly, his restless eyes following the scamp and frisk of a squirrel up a tree. "I guess my grandmother was one of that kind," he said.

Out of doors with the sky above him and the fecund earth beneath him, with the smell of bark and of leaves in his nostrils David could speak of his women-folk. But in the camp, in the crudely-built dwellings, in the dark of the mines, among the men who gambled and swore, he grew reticent and could not mention sacred things.

About this time, the foliage in a last ripening, turned russet and red; bronze lights played over the trees, the cold whipped warningly at the earth. The Sierras raised weazened snow-covered heights to a deepening sky. The sear yellow of future decay settled imperceptibly over the mountains. Stone Valley huddled close and waited patiently for snow and ice.

David was advanced to the position of head powder monkey.

" I'm going to be boss some day," he told Father Dunlap, who nodded encouragingly.

" You may be a Bank President, David."

" I guess being boss is good enough for me," returned David.

Time passed in Stone Valley. David became a " mucker," and managed the small cars of dirt that shot out on the hoist.

He was happy. Father Dunlap was his friend and guide. He had made friends too, among the miners whom he was to meet years afterwards in other camps; for these men traveled from mine to mine, tireless prospectors and diggers of precious metals, at mercy of rumor and luck.

There was Eddie Mead, a 'Frisco man, tall, rawboned, with steely blue eyes and the mouth of a woman; there was Shorty Kendall, the first man who discovered ore in Tonopah, a six foot six, heavy featured Hercules with a hand of iron and a heart bigger than all out of doors, whose six shooter was out at a moment's warning, and who could cry like a baby when he was drunk,— which was often. There was also Jack Minks, a red faced Canadian who should have been a professional football player.

These men were good to David. It flattered him to feel on an equal footing with them. Often he would stand and watch their games of stud poker, even vouchsafing opinions, which, however, were always blasphemously rejected. Had he the money, he would have played with them. But the stakes

were high, and it would have grieved Father Dunlap for him to gamble.

"Leave the boys this afternoon and come to my shack instead, I'll read to you, Davy," he would say.

This was when it was too cold for the walks.

Father Dunlap's shack consisted of a room built of rough hewn logs, with one small window. A modest pinewood shelf held the good priest's books.

There was a small table with a holy book always open upon it, a candle, a few skins on the walls, and an ivory crucifix, an ascetic cot, two wooden chairs and a stove.

Through the winter weather, when it was snowing in sheets of heavy perpendicular flakes that covered the earth and the rocks and the world with trackless mystery, Father Dunlap and David would stay snugly ensconced in the room, David curled on the cot, Father Dunlap seated by the little table. So they forgot for an hour or two Stone Valley, the mines and the reason men sweated and labored.

Father Dunlap would read. His voice chanted with monotonous reminiscence of holy offices.

Once he read from Homer: "First he cast his sharp sword about his strong shoulders; then he clad him in a very thick mantle to keep the wind away; and he caught up the fleece of a great and full fed goat, and seized his sharp javelin to defend him from dogs and men."

The boy, his face alight, listened greedily to the tales of the past, and long afterwards while he toiled in the gloom of the dark mine, his eyes would retain sparks of wonder for the great deeds of the

wandering hero, in the days when pagan gods protected supermen. His ears rang with the sonorous music of the Odyssey.

But such dreaming did not prevent him working tenaciously forward. Each month of the year, as it passed over Stone Valley advanced him on his way, taught him self-assurance and strength in dealing with simple men.

By the time he was seventeen, and had been in the mine two years, he had become a full-fledged miner, which meant that he could, according to an innocent boast, "pound a drill with any man."

Then one day, Father Dunlap, vigilant and wise, came to him: "David, the mine's working out. There's better than this for you."

It was Spring again. He and Father Dunlap had wandered far up the mountain and were lost in the rioting wilderness, lost among the fragrance of pines, with around them the first wafting odors of green things released from snow, the tinkle of ice broken streams, and the scurry of squirrels and the great silence of earth and mountain in travail.

Father Dunlap's eyes shone through a kindly mist: "There's better for you, David," he said.

The world seemed at that moment a wide hunting ground, with no forbidden spaces. In mind's eye David tramped over it, dressed in his miner's clothes, tapping and sounding rocks, sifting sand, finding treasures. He squared his shoulders and lifted eyes of a dog on the trail.

"Where shall I go?"

Father Dunlap hearing in his wise ears the clash

of struggle among men, smiled sadly and waved his hand. "To fresh fields, to fresh mines."

"I'll miss you," said David.

But this had to be; for step by step, in the work of living, each man following the traced thread of his destiny, must pass the crisscross of lines belonging to other lives. Two lives may not lie parallel for long unless they fuse and become one.

The grandmother Arnold, Isabella, Sullivan, Peter Crewe, and Betty, each had served a purpose. Now Father Dunlap stood at the end of his influence over David. Others would come. But David must go his way, leaving the priest to go his.

"There's a place in Montana called Butte — promising copper mines. Why not go there?" advised Father Dunlap.

"I'll go to Butte," David said, and made prompt preparations for departure.

Father Dunlap bade him Godspeed.

The Sierras looked upon his going with sublime indifference; Stone Valley to a man, wrung his hand, wished him luck and went back to its drilling and poker games.

David gazing back, saw the black garbed figure of the priest standing waving good-by. Behind him, like a castellated crown, ran the mountains. Beyond Stone Valley and the mountains, further than ever Father Dunlap could see, lay the world, a mouse trap, into which men crawled for the sake of a piece of cheese, circled around it and were taken out when they had eaten of the cheese.

CHAPTER VII

BUTTE, Montana, punctured with mines, sprawled on the flank of a hill, a prey to all the vindictive winds that rushed whistling and hissing from the desert. These winds with undisciplined violence, caught Butte by its neck, shook it like a terrier, flew alkali dust in its eyes, rattled its bones and tore on, leaving sundry gusts and gales to mess and worry the inhabitants, and as much as possible to cause annoyance and waste. In winter, the miners, strong bodied and resistant as they were, shivered and swore at devastating blizzards; in summer, they choked and shriveled with heat and railed at the sun. Nevertheless they throve obstinately, dug below earth for the means to build above, made fortunes and lost them, and watched one another suspiciously as athletes do in a big game.

There were men who for greater self-security formed giant organizations and juggled with copper as a fruitful plaything. The miners were pigmies in the service of these capitalized forces. This state of affairs was peaceful and convenient, until Henry Lynham chose Butte as a likely ground for independent schemes of Fortune. Henry Lynham was a brilliant mining engineer with a great deal of cool fore-sight, and an indomitable talent for standing alone.

Now it was the hitherto undisputed law in Butte, that a man might follow surface indications for ore on his own property to wherever they went. Henry Lynham accordingly bought fractions of unheld ground, and finding thereon protruding and promising looking veins, proceeded to work them for what they were worth; which was a great deal. But unfortunately they soon led into other mines.

Ensued confusion, envy and trouble.

Then the silently amassed powers controlling the other mines in Butte, whispered among themselves and looked askance at what was going on. But Henry Lynham calmly went his way . . . the way of all ambitious men, called legitimate if it be to success, crooked if it lead to failure. He engaged miners, he sank shafts, and continued briskly minding his own business.

It was about this time, that ignorant as a babe of complications, David Ghent arrived at Butte, and was promptly engaged on probation in one of Henry Lynham's mines.

His first impression of Butte was satisfying. It seemed an enterprising town and one which already strove to attainment of the luxuries of a city. There was a hotel and there were a few stores and streets that suggested possibilities, and a few houses which betrayed attempts at comfort, and enough saloons to supply alcohol for every inebriate in Butte. But for all that, the place remained crude and raw of aspect and habit.

David lived in a small room at the hotel. The sheets of his bed were clammy and damp, as if they

had been left to molder in the mines; the mirror was cracked, and a general air of uncleanly desuetude lurked betrayingly in the wall paper. But David did not mind such things.

He set to work with a will, determined that Mr. Plumtry, the superintendent of the mines in which he was engaged, should soon realize his worth. He did not like Mr. Plumtry, who was a thin mean-mouthed man, with never a generous word for anyone.

David had been in Butte a week, and all was going well, when one day, with two assistants he was drilling in a rock, an occupation moreover at which he excelled. His back was to the passage and he was intent upon his work. Suddenly from behind him, someone whose voice he did not recognize, said:

"I haven't seen you before. Where do you come from?"

Now David objected to any unnecessary interruptions when he was in the mine; he objected above all to what he considered officious questions. So he answered curtly, without turning his head:

"I'm not asking you who you are, am I?"

"Here!" exclaimed the unknown in sharp imperative tones. "None of that! You drop that drill and get off the job."

Then David wheeled about and stared at the speaker. By the flicker of the torches, he saw a short, quiet looking man, whose face was a mask built over iron framework, whose eyes beneath a rugged slope of forehead peered unwinking with

auger-like precision of aim. This man's manner suggested compactness of mind and matter and complete casting off of all waste.

"Who are you?" demanded David.

"Never you mind who I am," replied the man with crisp authority. "You get out of this mine when I tell you to."

The two assistants were sending desperate signals to David. But of his own accord now, rather crestfallen, and realizing the stranger's right to command, he climbed down from his position and, without another word started to slouch away down the long dark passage. Inwardly, he was calling himself names. The job was worth four dollars and a half a day with reasonable hopes of advancement. The only man who could have dismissed him so abruptly was Henry Lynham himself.

He had gone only a few steps when Henry Lynham, for it was he, called out sharply: "Wait a moment."

David turned and retraced his way with some obscure intention of apologizing for his mistake. But Henry Lynham gave him no chance to speak.

"How long have you been putting in these holes?" he asked.

"Three hours and a half, Sir, for seven holes."

"Eight hour shift for eight holes?"

"Yes, Sir."

"That's impossible," said Henry Lynham impatiently.

"I don't care to argue with you," replied David. "I'm off this job. That's all I need to know."

"If you can put in seven holes in three hours and a half, young man, we don't need you doing this business," said Henry Lynham.

"All right, Sir, I'm going."

With a hunch of his shoulders, which he sought to make indifferent, David walked slowly to the hoist.

Round shouldered miners brushed past him, like half blind animals, groping their dim eyed way among the dank labyrinth of gloom. The lights in their caps blinked and shivered, uneasy tufts of flame. Walls of rock, carved by the will of men, loomed uneven, and rugged with jutting ore. In the big chamber there was a feeling of water dripping and flowing on either side of the track upon which jolted the cars of ore, dragged by donkeys.

David reached the bucket, and was hauled up to light and air. Squinting in the sudden shock of noontide, he made his way to the superintendent's office. Mr. Plumtry was not there. Then David asked for his "time," was paid and was about to depart forever from Henry Lynham's mine, when Henry Lynham in person, came up behind him.

"Here, hold on, I need a shift boss. You'll do," said Henry Lynham.

David shoved his money in his pocket and eyed the older man quietly. "How much do I get?"

"That depends on how long you can hold a job."

"I'll take it," said David laconically.

This was at a time when Henry Lynham was sorely in need of honest men; for bad feeling against him in Butte, fanned by discreet powers, was growing

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from a murmur to a roar, which burst forth fitfully in nasty storms at night.

At first David, however, concerned himself but little with the situation. He had been put on the "graveyard" shift in the Marion mine, and worked all night and slept most of the day. Many of the men under him were older than he. But he had acquired a laconic power of word and deed which soon convinced them of his dignity and the justice of his dealings. At this period of his life, he was content to stand alone, conscious of a tussle before him. His work indeed was a material master which claimed his strength. When he slept, he never dreamed. Sometimes he thought of Dan Sullivan; sometimes of Father Dunlap. These two men remained dearer to him than any of the men in Butte.

Meanwhile trouble was being prepared for Henry Lynham, and for all men who stood beside him. Sentiments of hate and destruction broke forth in spots, later to spread openly in declared war. The miners in the opposing mines grew militantly antagonistic.

There were "strikes" like small explosions of dynamite. A cold gray unseen force pressed forward and ignited dangerous instincts in the primitive Cornishmen, Irishmen and Slavs working shoulder to shoulder in the enemy's mines.

Butte became a battlefield at dawn, where generals in their tents lay low and gave secret orders.

Some of Henry Lynham's miners were mysteriously maltreated. Inexplicable accidents happened to

them, death lurked about them traitorously. David Ghent now fully wide awake and alive to danger, held himself in readiness for trouble. The prospect of a fight did not worry him. He had made up his mind, whatever happened, to stand by Henry Lynham. Meanwhile he spent most of his nights in drinking and playing poker in the hotel barroom with Plumtry and other men in Lynham's mines.

But all the time, he was learning a great deal about mines and about men.

One night, when he had gone to his room early, he was aroused by a tapping at his door. He cursed at the intruder, but as the noise continued, finally shuffled from his bed and went to open.

Plumtry, pale and disheveled, stood at the door.

"Mr. Lynham wants you, David. There's trouble. The boys of the Carson mine have broke in and are smudging us out. There's h—ll to pay. For God's sake hurry up."

Before David could answer, he had gone, thudding down the hall, knocking at other doors.

David dressed quickly, with a tense sense of exhilaration at the prospect of a fight. He had been expecting just such a call in the night. He found Henry Lynham, fully dressed and impassive, sitting in the superintendent's office. A lamp glimmering on the big table near the window, shed sickly rays over the barely furnished room. Plumtry paced the floor, his hands behind his back.

David stood lean and alert before Henry Lynham, like a soldier awaiting orders.

"Know the mine pretty well, don't you, David?" said Henry Lynham.

"Better than any man in the world," answered David simply.

"You've heard?"

David nodded.

"Can you manage it?"

"Yes, Sir."

"How many men will you need?"

"Two."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'll fix them all right," said David confidently; "just let me have one of the forges and the biggest fan you can spare."

Henry Lynham turned to Plumtry: "Give him what he wants," he said curtly.

Almost at once, two heavily built miners slouched in and ranged themselves beside David. By the wavering light of the crudely smelling lamp, in their soft felt hats, flannel shirts and boots, they looked like bandits.

"Hello, Steve — Hello, Jim," David greeted them cheerfully, "there's going to be a hot time before we get through."

The two men grinned. They were not to be easily frightened.

They took the forge, four boxes of sulphur, charcoal and an exhaust fan, and descended into the mine.

The air of the chamber was stifling with poisonous fumes. In the tremulous light of torches miners staggered, coughing and swearing. From a treacherous opening leading into the Carson mine, deadly gases

crept nauseatingly. David wasted no time. He gave short, quick orders. Men obeyed him.

The forge was placed; charcoal lit, sulphur put on it, and the exhaust fan started. It resulted as David had hoped: the fan was so powerful that it drove a mighty counterforce of sulphur into the adjoining mine. Then there was war between the fumes, war that filled crevices and rocky sides, that caught men at the throat and strangled them. Not a sound was heard, but the whirring of the fan like a giant insect, creating a draught that nothing could resist. Little by little the mine was cleared. Only a stale trace of sulphur and gas lingered. David ordered the hole to be bulkheaded, and then flopped softly to the floor in a faint.

For this night's work he was appointed assistant superintendent.

The next day a deceptive lull settled over the town. Not a word of the affair was spoken, except in whispers over drinks.

But Henry Lynham said to David: "Expect more trouble. The fun's only just beginning."

Rumor had it that his mines were condemned to be dynamited. But he never flinched. The drilling and hauling and sorting of ore went on in them, while cool as death itself, he stood with faithful men mustered near him, vigilant and determined, in readiness for whatever might come.

A few nights after that first alarm, the Carson miners broke in the Marion mine like gnawing rats or thieves in the night. This time David was waiting for them. Then in the dark, men fought.

There was the quickened shuffle of boots on the damp ground, the heavy gasp of men struggling, a silent onslaught of body against body, and the dry click of revolvers, and the thud of falling bodies.

David stood rigidly, breathing the turgid air, every nerve whipped to an acute sense of joy in the danger. He mingled with the dark, alive with it and fierce, a lust of killing vengefully, leaping and pounding like a pump in action. He struck into space and felt once or twice the flail of his fist crush into yielding matter. Here, in the murk of the earth's bowels, it was each man for himself, grim mingling of friend and foe, neither revealed. It was here that David felt the violent call of his nature shocked into self-defense. The rage of a Berserker raced through his blood.

They fought until Henry Lynham's men drove the intruders back from where they had come. Then with muffled groans and curses, battered and wounded men were hoisted up to the entrance of the Marion mine.

The night was lit by a sallow moon and ashen stars. All seemed quiet. But the enemy was watching. Men sprang suddenly from hiding places, and, like a storm unsubdued, the fight went on beneath the pale moon.

David herded his men quickly, calling sharp orders to them. They lunged, swayed, broke, and each man fought for himself.

He felt a nipping sting in his right arm, shifted his revolver, and fought on. Once, behind him,

there was a soft groan, and Plumtry, livid in the moonlight, his hair wild, a smoking revolver in his hand, darted out and fled like a guilty thing.

Then the crepitation of shots grew intermittent. Inch by inch, knots of men gave way, scattered and were lost in the night, until at last all noise was stilled.

Three men huddled dead on the ground, in formless bundles; two men lay shot in the mine. . . . There were many wounded.

David dripping sweat and blood, went to report to Henry Lynham.

"They'll pay for this," said Henry Lynham.

"They've paid for it some, already," answered David grimly.

The dead were shuffled away like draggled, useless cards in a game. Peace of the night dropped as a curtain.

But Henry Lynham's men murmured among themselves. David, on his way to the hotel, passing a group of them, heard the name of Plumtry spoken low. Waldo Carfield, a bland giant, was saying that Plumtry made use of the night to kill one of his own men, a personal enemy of his. David, remembering Plumtry's flight, sternly ordered the gossips to hold their tongues. Then he went his way. His arm which had been shot was hurting him. He went to the doctor who lived in the hotel, had the wound dressed, threw himself on his bed and slept until late next morning.

Henry Lynham summoned him the next day.

"Mr. Plumtry had to leave Butte this morning to see his mother who is ill. D'you understand, Davy?"

David, very pale, his arm in a sling, nodded, "Yes, Sir."

Henry Lynham pulled a long reflective puff from his cigar, and stared fixedly at David.

"It's an unusual thing to make a young man not yet 21 superintendent of a mine, with 4000 men under him, and a salary of $500 a month."

"Depends on the young man, Sir," said David promptly.

"Huh!" grunted Henry Lynham. "We'll see."

In this manner and without further formality, David was appointed superintendent of the mine.

CHAPTER VIII

NOW the powers who had been directing the course of events, called forward heavier machinery to annihilate at all costs, the pretentions of the one man who menaced their will, established dangerous precedents of independence and impudently claimed protection of the law.

Henry Lynham was an intruder. Fights in the dark not having quelled his spirit, now graver schemes were dragged forward like battering rams ready to shove him implacably off the field of battle.

Legal machinery creaked, small wheels buzzed. A giant showed a bland face through clouds of cautious warfare, and declared that he for one would shut down his mines, unless Henry Lynham were chased from Butte. If the mines were shut down, there would be thousands of unemployed men. When they heard of it, miners went mad, which was exactly what the giant had hoped they would do.

Meanwhile Henry Lynham's four thousand men worked on steadily. It was worth their while. They were well paid and dealt with fairly. But they had wives and children to protect and they were exposed daily to the hatred of the thousands, threatened with unemployment.

Strange things happened. Lynham's ore was side-tracked on railroads, and was not delivered in

time to the refineries. On every side obstacles emerged like giant icebergs, sailing around this man to crush him as if he were a frail bark.

During long anxious days he sat phlegmatically in his office, listening to unfavorable reports and by holding his council, forcing the powers to show their hand. Beside him were a knot of men whose interest it was to remain faithful. Among them was David Ghent who now owned a small interest in the Marion mine.

David threaded his way dauntlessly through these strained times. He was working from sixteen to eighteen hours a day, which was more than any man can do without feeling the strain. But he had his way to make, inch by inch, and it could only be made by work. Moreover, in spite of his good fellowship to many men, at the bottom of his soul he remained a solitary and a dreamer, who, thinking a great deal about many things, shared his thoughts with no one.

The inconsistencies of this supposedly free country did not escape him. It was not all as Father Dunlap had pictured it. Men were not equal, nor could they ever be, according to the inviolate scheme of humanity. Appetites ruled the individual who ruled the mob. An individual ceased to be part of the mob, as soon as he could become strong enough or rich enough to command. Syndicates were the safest means to power, civilized shields from behind which rulers dictated. The man who is protected may scheme patiently; the man who stands out alone is watched.

Henry Lynham stood alone; his adversaries were

covered because they stood together. David admired Henry Lynham and felt brotherhood with him.

There is nothing more autocratic, thought David, than the clash of self-made men, when personal interests are at stake. A self-made man is an idealist and a primitive. He has the imagination to be ambitious and the elemental instinct to plan for his own advancement, through all reforms, through all civilization. Also America is the home of the self-made man.

This clash in Butte was the contest between a self-made man and a syndicate. It was soon a question of each man at his post beside or against Henry Lynham.

Several of the mines were shut, although the pumps were kept working. Then there swept the winds of a panic over the unemployed, and others who feared a like fate.

A meeting was held of miners and their wives and children forming a densely packed army of human beings representing threatened labor. As a single stern body, as one throat vociferating self-protection, they swayed and grumbled, the men with brooding eyes and haggard faces, the women with sucklings at their breasts, and dragging at their skirts, the children, weazened prototypes. The crowd meant to fight; they meant to clamor for bread, to kill if necessary. Half crazed, they did not reason. Henry Lynham had been shown to them as a scarecrow on a field where lay seed for all. They were ready to swoop upon him and peck him to rags.

Scabrous plots rose from the dull minds of the

lower-brained; the knell sounded of Henry Lynham. Men had their say, women their wail. The elemental questions of food and of work rose stark and vital.

It was decreed that Henry Lynham must leave Butte; some whispered the earth.

But Henry Lynham hearing the voice of the people inexorable, merciless, called a meeting of the men who were on a profit-sharing basis with him. For all this was a question of money.

CHAPTER IX

THE meeting took place in Henry Lynham's private library, which, furnished soberly with dark red hangings, oak chairs, a big oval table and well filled bookcases, seemed in itself a guarantee of solvency. Henry Lynham had attained these comforts in Butte at great personal expense. Usually they who came into this room, entered it with curiosity and left it with respect. Ravings and menaces battered uselessly against its closed doors, for here was the concentration of an opposing force; here Henry Lynham was master of his own schemes.

On this particular morning the men filed in quietly and took their places at the big central table. Three of them sat on the right; three on the left. Henry Lynham sat at the head of the table. He was very pale, with deep furrows on either side of his mouth. But determination shone from his eyes like the beacons of a lighthouse in a fog, and no signs of fear or nerves disturbed the usual poise of his manner. He was facing possible defeat, possible extermination, as he had trained himself to face all emergencies in the big games he chose to play.

He sat straight in his leather covered armchair and weighed each word he spoke. He did not speak

until he had commanded the motionless attention of these six men: Hobart Jefferson, the financier; Philip Smith, the attorney; Joel Grant, the newspaper man; Dicky Bird and Denis Oran, the political henchmen; and David Ghent.

"Gentlemen," he said, at last, in a cool, dry voice, "I suppose you know what we are here for. I suppose you know that we have reached the climax of the situation. I'll admit that everything seems against us. Now there is just one thing I want particularly to say to you to-day, one wish, even command, to give you," he paused and looked keenly around him, "I must ask you, no matter what happens, let there be no violence — none of our seeking in any case."

The men stared at him, their bodies tense, their faces drawn to tight masks of control.

David Ghent, the youngest, listened, every nerve quickened to a sharp point of attention. In spite of the issues at stake, he felt curiously detached from these older men and also, as far as he was concerned, from the vital consequences of the fight. A great confidence in himself, a shrewd cool instinct of self-preservation, whispered to him that he could afford to face the situation. After all he was playing his first big game, while the others were playing, perhaps, their last. Dicky Bird, with a perceptibly shaking hand lit a cigar.

"Each of you serves me in different ways," continued Henry Lynham; "each of you represents different sides of my interests, as well as your own. I want you to feel, as I do, that we're not beaten yet.

We've got to win!" He lifted his head proudly and looked again around him as if challenging an answer. None came. The men seemed waiting for him to explain many things.

"I want suggestions from you," he said, "and when I've heard what each of you thinks, I'll let you know what I've decided to do."

There was a silence. Dicky Bird chewed his cigar and stared into space. Someone shifted in his seat. But no man looked at the other. They sat huddled or erect in various attitudes of concentration. David leaned back in his chair and waited as a spectator waits for the outcome of a thrilling play.

Henry Lynham turned to Hobart Jefferson: "Mr. Jefferson, will you tell us in a few words exactly what is the financial situation?" The financier rose slowly, leaned a hand on the table and cleared his throat. He was a short, nervous looking man, with light bleared eyes and a scanty mustache. His voice was hoarse like that of a man who has smoked too much and slept little.

He stated gloomily that the exchequer was in a bad way and that Railroads were against Henry Lynham and were holding back copper shipments. He would soon not be able to meet his obligations. Then he slid back into his seat and began to chew his cigar.

Henry Lynham, without comment, scribbled a few notes on a block of paper before him, and motioned to the attorney, a lean sly-faced man with predatory eyes and claw like gestures. From him it was learned that several important lawsuits were impend-

ing. Heavy indemnity bonds would be required. He had hustled all that day without any success, but hoped to procure the necessary bonds for the following day. He resumed his place with the air of a man who has accomplished the impossible.

Henry Lynham nodded briefly and waved to Joel Grant, the newspaper man, a bluff Westerner, who was at all other times irrepressibly jocose. To-day his manner was subdued. He said that he was conscious of antagonism among the subscribers. The merchants were joining Henry Lynham's enemies. The paper was losing advertisers.

Now each in turn, the political henchmen gave pessimistic reports of bad feeling against the man who sat before them still and impassive, taking notes, now and then asking curt questions. The atmosphere in the room had become oppressive. Most of the men were smoking, and through thick clouds of smoke, their faces stared fixed and stoic. Henry Lynham's mouth tightened to a straight line. He leaned with both elbows on the table, his back rounded, his chin sunken on his chest. Only when it came David's turn to speak, he looked at the younger man, with faint, quick eagerness.

David had been expecting this look. During all the talk of the other men he had sat as at a poker game, not a muscle of his face moving. But a storm of impatience raged in his head. He thrummed his fingers on the table.

Now, as at a signal, he shot to his feet, galvanizing the sluggish atmosphere in the room. His chair scraped against the floor. He raised a clenched fist

and brought it down with a dull pound on the table. "Damn it all," he cried, "those big men don't dare shut down their mines. Gentlemen, have you thought of that? And suppose the mines are closed . . . all of 'em. What'll happen? . . . Let the fools starve, and they'll crawl back begging. They've got to sooner or later."

The men turned startled eyes towards him. David's manner was so vigorous that it shook them out of their stolid control. But he paid no attention to them, only looked at Henry Lynham, as if he were the only soul in the room who counted.

"We're bound to win," he asserted. "If our men are such fools as to follow the others . . . why give 'em a taste of hunger, too. We've got the game in our hands, easy. Look at here . . ." he bent eagerly towards Henry Lynham, emphasizing his words by rapping on the table. "They daren't close the smelters. Why, they can't start over again without tremendous loss, and they aren't going to risk anything."

"That's so," murmured Henry Lynham.

"All we've got to do then," cried David, facing the other men challengingly, "is to keep our mouths shut and stick. But there's one thing *you* can do, Mr. Lynham, if you've got the nerve, a move you can make that may win the battle."

"What is that, Mr. Ghent?" asked Henry Lynham.

"You can make a speech to those miners, Sir, as man to man," said David slowly. "You can tell 'em the truth. They don't know the truth. It's the

miners you want to get with, Sir, not the men behind 'em." He turned from Henry Lynham's intent frown and addressed himself for the first time direct to the five other men.

"If Mr. Lynham can make the right speech, gentlemen, those miners will be with him quicker than a shot. You may not believe me, but I tell you I'm right."

Surprise and antagonism altered the faces of the men. The financier went white and made as if to spring from his chair. "I protest," he cried, "it would be madness."

"No, Sir," declared David emphatically, "big games have got to be played big or not at all." His eyes met squarely those of Henry Lynham.

"Those men are dangerous just now," murmured the attorney reflectively.

"Most of them are crazy drunk."

"It's sure folly," shouted Michael Oran. "We'd better give in than that."

A wave of uncomfortable fear swept over these men who only a moment ago had been resigned to conventional defeat. The trenchant daring of David's suggestion, the new aspect it had given to the situation, forced them to consider action and the possibilities of violence that it contained. They began to talk all at once now. Their faces, grown red and excited, shone out from the smoke-thick evil air; their gestures were heavy. Henry Lynham never said a word. He seemed not to belong to them. He sat, his chin sunk on his chest, a little frown between his eyebrows. But suddenly he rose and

pushed back his chair with a definite scrape. All eyes were turned to him. The noise of discussion ceased.

He took out his watch and consulted it thoughtfully. "Excuse me, Gentlemen, I'll be with you in ten minutes," he said, bowing to them with grave courtesy, and left the room.

There was a momentary lull and then renewed agitation. David slid back into his seat and held his peace as he listened to the older men wrangling, arguing and swearing. They seemed to him like rats in a trap, quarreling over the way of escape.

Hobart Jefferson gnawed at his nails, until his fingers bled. Joel Grant kept saying: "I know 'em, I tell you, you can't do any speechingfying with the boys here in Butte. If they want us to get out, we've got to go."

The air was unbreatheable. A stench of stale smoke floated like drift to the ceiling. There were ashes spilled on the table and on the floor. David thought, with some contempt of these men who were showing fear. He wondered what Henry Lynham would decide to do. He thought that were he in Lynham's place, he would make that speech. All men respected courage, even cowards.

In the meanwhile Henry Lynham spent his ten minutes in the following manner. He went into the adjoining room, his bedroom; he drank a glass of water, stretched himself on the bed, and by the big clock ticking on the mantelpiece, slept ten minutes.

Then he rose and went back to the waiting men.

With his coming, silence fell.

He walked to the table, leaned a hand upon it, and in the expectant ensuing hush, said quietly, looking at David:

"Gentlemen, I'll make that speech this afternoon."

CHAPTER X

IN Butte there was Bedlam.

Announcements of Henry Lynham's speech placarded all over the town incited the population to such militant protest that it looked as if he would never live through any speech with which he might think to calm the troubled souls of the unemployed. The spirit of all revolutions was indeed in Butte that day.

Men reeled whooping down the street, with bleary eyes, grim mouths and crazy gestures. There was a forming and dissolving of groups into patterns that were dangerous. The gaunt wolf of starvation slunk in shadows, staring ravenously at women and children. Some of these women trembled and held their babes closer; others, with tumbled hair and wild eyes, pressed near to their men.

Meanwhile Henry Lynham sat in his library waiting the hour. He was dressed as if for a marriage, in a frock coat, white shirt and high hat. The six men in miner's clothes waited with him. David paced the room restlessly. The five other men stared at him askance; but he did not notice them, so eager was he for the fight to begin. Once, as a diversion, there was a soft rap on the door. At Henry Lynham's sharp, "What is it?" Waldo Carfield, a six foot miner trod gently into the room, like

an abashed woman. He stood twisting his cap and gazing about him with gentle blue eyes. "May I speak to Mr. Ghent?"

David went quietly to the door: "Got it fixed, Waldo?" he whispered.

"They'll never dare shoot the old man," said the blue eyed giant. "I'll have the best shots in town right behind him. If any man in the crowd makes a move, he's a goner."

David nodded slightly, "Fine."

The man creaked away.

Moments dragged on leaden feet to the appointed hour. At last Henry Lynham rose to his feet gravely: "Well, Gentlemen, shall we go now?"

As he passed David, on his way out, the younger man offered his hand impulsively, "You've got grit all right now. Shake on it."

"Thank you, David," said Henry Lynham.

They sallied forth from the room impressively, like soldiers marching on a forlorn hope. Henry Lynham went first, holding his head high, his arms hanging loosely at his sides. Behind him, two by two, shoulder to shoulder, keeping step, came the six men. There was Jefferson Hobart, Philip Smith, Joel Grant, Dicky Bird and Michael Oran and David, the youngest.

The street was packed with a dully menacing crowd that waited in thick silence, until the squad of men who dared brave them, started to cleave way towards the Court House, from where Henry Lynham intended to make his speech. Then, like sullen drifts of clouds in a storm ridden sky the

crowd closed in upon the marching men, closed around them, as if to efface their tracks forever and smother their advance.

As unflinchingly Henry Lynham wedged himself a path, proudly walking on past women and children and crazed men, the silence split into a thousand splinters of sound. Rough hoots and yells and curses rained from every direction.

"See him! There he goes!"

"The skunk!"

"Kill him. Tar and feather him!"

"Down with him . . . down . . . down . . . down!"

Yet they marched steadily on. Not a shot cracked, not a hand that was raised fell. Only eyes glaring distrust and hatred, and a surge of overwhelming humanity ready to spring, withheld by no one knew what vague sentiment of respect.

Lynham reached the steps of the Court House and mounted them, turning his back, for a second, with what seemed magnificent recklessness on the seething mass of vengeful human beings. Then he faced them sternly, his own six men clustered about him.

A fierce sun beat scalding rays on his upturned face. The sky was like a hot blue shield. Beneath it sweltering and maddened, were men who with distorted masks, and wide open mouths clamored for justice.

David stood at Henry Lynham's right. By turning his head slightly to one side he could see Waldo Carfield and his men, all of them crack shots, ap-

parently loafing lazily in the sun at the bottom of the steps. But Carfield's nod to David was business like.

When Henry Lynham raised a hand, opened his mouth and began to speak, a roar arose and swept against him as against a rock. But his lips moved on. He spoke steadily, dropping word after word into the raging sea of sound. At one moment it seemed as if he would never be heard, as if indeed, he had walked to his doom that day. But not a muscle of his face quivered a signal of fear. Undaunted, magnificent, confident, as a very force of nature he faced those who could destroy him.

Then, in the tumult, someone cried out: "Let's hear what he has to say." This suggestion awakened the curiosity of expectant masses. They subsided to a silence that bided its time.

Henry Lynham's voice rose and fell earnestly, reaching across to the fringe of the mob. His eyes never wavered from the eyes watching him.

He talked as a man telling the story of his life simply to another man. He told how he had come to make his way in Butte; how when he arrived he had seen that the life of miners was hard; how accordingly he had labored with them and for them as best he could, to better their condition. He reminded them that it was he who instituted the system of insurance and of hospitals; he who, more than any other mine owner in the country, had insisted upon proper ventilation in the mines. There had been fewer casualties in his mines than in any of

the others. All his attitude towards his men had tended towards the encouragement of manhood.

The throng stirred and breathed, and drew closer one to the other, losing identity in a vast strained attention.

Henry Lynham spoke on. He said that every man could hope one day to be a superintendent, a manager, an owner, even a president. Those who had the stuff of leaders in them, some day, inevitably, would lead. For above all, action counted. But action must be directed by justice; else no man would have fair chance.

Thereupon Henry Lynham thundered his creed. He believed in eight hour shifts for his men, instead of ten or twelve as in other mines; he believed in comforts for his men, reading rooms, bath rooms, development for their minds and cleanliness for the body, those comforts that made the men feel self-respect. He believed in bigger wages; he believed that where there was danger there to face it should be the owner of the mine, by the side of his men.

But it seemed that he was not to be allowed these reforms, that he was to be chased from Butte like a thief. He had come this day to ask fair minded men if they would allow such injustice.

His voice rose now in volume and played upon the mob as upon a mighty instrument with quivering strings which hummed like leaves at the passage of wind. There was a stretch of necks and heads towards him, a subdued rustle and tension of muscles.

" Because I own mines now, doesn't mean that you and your sons and the sons of your sons, won't some

rose in spurts of sound.

"Would you turn the othe
struck at you? No, sir!" sh
"No, sir! You'd fight to ke
law. You'd fight for your
. . . just as you're fighting n
you're wronged. But haven't
too? Won't you see that I get
crush me, if you see fair play.'

"That's so!" came answer.

"He's square."

"A man's got a right."

"No man can drive me out,
ham. "I'm not the man who
Justice to everybody, I say. A
has this been my seeking?"

"No . . . no!" shouted the

A single flame of fellowship
of response to the eternal cry of
from the other men alone. Fc
elemental

that towered and shattered with sound of thunder. Women sobbed in a jangling of nerves; children squeaked: above all, the hoarse mighty roar of men burst its bonds.

Men sprang forward, seized Henry Lynham and his six followers and bore them high on ready shoulders. Beneath them, in a wild fellowship, rampaged the mob, impassioned, screaming itself hoarse. A procession formed and carried Henry Lynham and the six men in triumph around the town.

David Ghent trembled like an aspen leaf, and said foolish things to the men who bore him on their shoulders. Once he caught Henry Lynham's eye and grinned.

CHAPTER XI

THE day after Henry Lynham's great speech, when it seemed as if there were nothing more to work over or worry about, David Ghent quietly collapsed. While he lay raving with fever, in the little hotel room, matters of importance to him and to others arose and were neatly disposed of. The situation, from the crisis of a problem, tobogganed to a diplomatic state of compromise. The Powers suggested peaceable and advantageous means for the dignified, but still necessary exit of Henry Lynham from Butte. Moreover having found in him a tenacious adversary, they spared him complete financial defeat and bought from him his mines. Accordingly, violence, lawsuits and other minor troubles melted like snows in the sun. Butte subsided to a tranquil reaction.

Next, so that everyone should be more or less content, Henry Lynham, before departing from the scene of recent strife, divided in fair slices among his faithful followers, a part of the cake of peace offered him.

Now although David was not present to claim a share of this partitionment, he was not neglected. A snug bit of profit lay fallow in his name. But this he did not know until later. The Doctor, a brawny six foot man, with whom it was not wise to argue,

protected his patient for some time from good news or bad.

Then came a time however, when David refused to remain passive any longer.

"I've got to know what I'm up against," he said one day, and raising himself on an elbow in his narrow bed, looked around him with considerable disgust, "This place gets on my nerves."

"Well you're going to hurry out of it and out of Butte too, mighty quick, unless you want to be buried here," said the Doctor.

"Bad as that?" David looked mildly interested.

The Doctor tapped his chest significantly. "I don't say how it is, my boy, but all the same, you'd better have a change of air."

"All right!" said David wearily. "I'll go and browse somewhere for a while."

At that moment, ambition was subservient to health. Besides Henry Lynham, his only friend, had left Butte, after giving the Doctor a word of advice for David to do likewise.

So David obeyed, not caring much where he went. Convalescing was a new sensation. He had not rested since the day he had left Wheaton. At the suggestion of the Doctor he decided to go to a summer resort near Detroit. He felt hopeless and bewildered at finding himself suddenly taken away from the mines, away from the bleak winds of Montana, out of the rough and tumble world, where men grappled and scrambled as best they could for elementals.

He was not prepared to step over the boundary

The country was smiling and gay,
over lawns and woods. Here
shapely and of easy approach.
smooth, the flowers in the fields
tassels of color; the lake was of
and the cottages were well behave
homes surrounded by pleasant gar
light hearted people skimmed ove
surfaces, rattling down the roads
in canoes on the lake, wandering
the scented woods.

The Grand Hotel, overlooking
rambling wooden edifice, with br
wide, low ceilinged rooms.

When David Ghent came the
June, it was already crowded with
guests. The rocking chairs on
creaked to the accompaniment of
the trip of flippant heels sounded
big hall; there was a whisk of femi

Now he became miserably harnessed with it, for he saw that he was different from all these people. He dressed differently, walked, talked and ate differently. He shambled in and out of the hall and dining-room, aware of brightly malicious eyes fixed upon him. His clothes hung loosely from his lean figure, his trousers flapped as he loped past whispering groups on the piazza.

The women made him feel shy. Even the men seemed of another race. Most of them were young college fellows on their vacation. They swaggered a great deal and joked over their drinks in the bar, as David had never heard men joke in mining camps. One or two of them spoke to him, but his manner was discouraging, so they soon left him alone.

The other men were pompous and anxious looking husbands and fathers, who seemed more than anything else to enjoy playing bézique after supper with their wives.

David, to get away from them all, took long, solitary walks.

"Wonder if I'll ever learn this Society business," he would ask himself, as with a long black cigar for company, he slouched through the spiced woods near the lake, trying to lose himself in an arabesque of bushes and tortuous paths that, however, seemed always to lead out to the same smooth road.

He had never, until now, realized how completely the activity of his life among ruder types of men had crowded out the questionable advantages of education and superficial manners. He wondered if his

monster — his father. No! s
self-assured and noisy. She an
longed to a different generatio

Meanwhile his strength was
sweet air of Lake Grove entere
icent waves. He breathed
shoulders and began to feel rea

His loneliness found relief
Sam McKew, the hotel propri
young man, who lounged in the
one of its guests, and who consid
good indeed, if not better, than m
young man would not always
father had been Irish; his mother
sidered himself a fair type of
zen.

"You watch your uncle Dudl
David one day. "In five years I
of these hotels all over the countr
how I made my money and be a

She paused demurely. "Roses? I haven't any."

"Yes, you have, two of them, one in each cheek," gallantly answered the young hotel proprietor. As she went her way simpering and blushing he jerked his thumb after her. "Nice kid. I'm going to marry a girl like that some day."

"I'd never dare tackle such a proposition," said David, who, while the young girl had stopped near them, had been over-conscious of owning arms and legs.

Sam McKew looked at him shrewdly. "Why, they'll be scrappin' over you some day, my boy. You're the kind that's easy food for sweet young girls."

"Sure!" exclaimed David bitterly. "I'm an elegant enough geek for any girl."

"Oh, if you have the money, they'll tumble," remarked Sam McKew. "I know 'em, they're all after husbands."

David pretended indifference, but thereafter, more than ever, his keen eyes did not miss the quirk or flaunt of a ruffle, a glance or a word of the pretty creatures who pranced by him with apparent disdain.

A few evenings after this conversation, Sam McKew said, "Say, there's going to be a dance to-night. There'll be some peaches out, Davy. Better come. A little girl arrived to-night on the five o'clock train, and she certainly is a queen. Mother's a handsome woman too; the father is sickly."

David grunted: "Oh, I don't care for such things."

Then he went to his room and dressed with un-

usual care. When he was all ready, he stared at himself critically in the mirror. His appearance did not please him. He shook his shoulders like a dog after a swim, and slouched down to the dining-room with an air of furtive defiance. Sitting alone at a little table in a corner, he did not look around him, but concentrated his attention on a huge and satisfactory supper.

That evening there was an unusual flutter in the big barn-like dining-room. He could hear giggling and a high pitch of feminine trills and the clatter of plates. The dining-room smelt heavily of coffee and pie.

After supper he strolled into the ballroom.

Chairs were ranged stiffly against the walls. Three windows looking out on the piazza were open, and perfumed night air, charged with flower and grass scents, drifted in subtly.

David made his way to a chair by a window. The round shaped room with its freshly greased floor was gayly decorated. Tawdry holiday looking flags hung on the wall, dutifully creating an illusion of festivity.

Shorn branches of wilting leaves framed an alcove, where sat the orchestra, consisting of a peaked looking pianist and a shabby little violinist. The pianist was limping through fragments of well known classics, as if to prove that he could manage other things besides the prostituting grind of dance music. The violinist was tuning an acid voiced, crudely colored cheap instrument. He was very solemn and bent his head close to the strings, listening

to their discordant whine, as with a tired grimace, he twisted at their tuning screws.

The lights blared out, garish trials to any but young and flawlessly beautiful women. An after supper prattle rose in shrill fitful snatches from the piazza.

David felt lonely and vowed under his breath that he would soon leave the hotel and get back to work among men. This was not the type of life for him. He yawned and listened to the music which had struck up a jingling rhythm that tinkled invitation through the open window. Whereupon the youth of the Grand Hotel streamed joyously into the room; a few dowagers solemnly waddling behind them.

Girls dressed in light muslins, with ribbons of every color and description pinned or tied somewhere upon their hair and around their waists, with elaborately arranged pompadours and powdered noses, twittered self-consciously. They herded together with a deceptive display of feminine demonstrativeness, which sought, by feline gesture, to express ingenuous sincerity. They promenaded two by two, hand in hand; they danced together, their eyes the while darting promising challenge to the few promising youths who lounged imperturbably in the doorway with the scrutinizing glances of buyers.

David idly watched the couples rotate in flutters and glides. He had learned once upon a time to dance, and to dance well, in a cheap saloon at Butte. There had been a young man from the East, who had amused himself and a blasphemous company by teaching the waltz and the polka. David had

woman.

This girl entered the room,
of the sensation she was creat
ily, like a young queen, beneat
and tinkle of music.

She was tall and slim and
walked. David, staring at he
that she was in white, that her s
proudly, that her eyes were as l
that her hair was color of whea

She chose a chair by the wind
side the elder woman, who was e
They whispered together, takin
creet survey of the room. Or
faintly, as her eyes swept past I
cians and rested for the fractio
tall, well dressed youth loungir
But when he noticed the look an
self fatuously, as if after all not
she turned her head away from h
dancing

ballroom, dodging the dancers as if they were mechanical revolving toys. He went straight to the Bar and ordering a whisky and soda, poured out a strong drink, gulped it down and poured out another. Almost at once the fiery stimulant raced to his brain.

"Gee, she's a peach," he whispered to himself.

Just then Sam McKew appeared. "Hello, Davy! not dancing?" David turned quickly.

"Say, Sam; who's the girl with the hair?" He did not think it necessary to describe her more fully.

Sam McKew chuckled: "A pippin, ain't she? She's the one who came on the five o'clock. Name's Earle. Spelt with an E. Miss Lucia Earle *and* parents. I guess they haven't much money. They took two of our cheap rooms."

"I want to meet her," said David.

Sam McKew winked genially. "Waking up, my boy? Well, p'haps I can manage it for you. Come along, I'll introduce you."

"Oh, no!" said David steadily. "Go and ask mother first, if she wants to know me."

"That's correct," agreed the good natured proprietor of the hotel. "I'll fix it for you all right."

"Have a drink?" David shoved the bottle towards him. He waved it lightly away.

"Nixie. Not for mine in business hours." Then he rose lazily, smiled at David and lounged out of the room. "I'll be back presently," he called over his shoulder. David sat looking into space, summoning with all the fiercely awakened worship of

his imagination, the image of this beautiful girl. He repeated her name softly: "Lucia . . . Lucia Earle."

In a short time Sam McKew returned.

"Come along, my boy, I told 'em you were a Western millionaire. That fixed you fine with the old lady. . . . See?"

David looked at him steadily. "I'm going to be some day," he said. "That girl's worth it."

"Gee, you've got it bad," joked Sam, and, taking David familiarly by the arm, steered him back to the ballroom.

David took the mother's proffered hand in an intense grip which might easily have made her wince.

"Pleased to meet you, ma'am," he said solemnly. But when he stood before the girl, he lowered his eyes and held her hand, as if it had been a rare bit of porcelain.

After the usual murmured greetings from the two women, Sam McKew with a friendly nod to David, left them, and David invited Lucia Earle to dance. Then as he took her in his arms, the whole world seemed to melt and fuse into a moment of fulfillment. The violin whined a waltz, to which the piano, out of tune, strummed an awkward accompaniment. But to David now the music seemed entrancing. He moved away mechanically, threading among the whirling couples as if he were in a dream.

A faint perfume of violets drifted from the wheat colored hair. The wide blue eyes were clear and young; the mouth was thin, the narrow, chiseled lips pink.

"I've never seen anyone so beautiful as you," he whispered.

The violin notes wavered and closed. The dance was over. She slipped from his arms and floated ahead of him back to her mother.

Mrs. Earle sat very straight in her chair. Her white hair gave her a distinguished appearance. Her nose was slightly aquiline; her lips were thin and straight of line. She looked like a bird of some kind.

"Mr. Ghent dances very well," observed the daughter.

"He seems to. Won't you sit down?" said the mother graciously.

"Thank you, I will." He looked at the two women with diffidence. They seemed to be according him a great privilege.

The mother raised her lorgnette and stared around the room. "There are not many people here one knows, are there?"

David looked up innocently, "I don't know anyone."

"Neither do we," murmured Lucia. Her voice was slightly nipped as with freeze.

"They're a queer lot of geeks," observed David, conclusively.

Mother and daughter exchanged a swift glance.

"I hear you're a mining man, Mr. Ghent," said Mrs. Earle suavely. "My husband is, or rather was, a mining engineer. But he had to give it up. His health failed him," she sighed faintly.

"That's too bad," said David with immediate sympathy.

"But he would be glad to talk to you about your mines," continued the mother, and fanned herself slowly with a big black spangled fan.

"Oh, I don't own any mines . . . yet." David was staring at the girl's profile.

"Don't you indeed?" persisted the mother. "I thought Mr. McKew . . ."

"Oh, I've had interest in one or two and likely to again," said David absent-mindedly.

The girl looked at him with gentle blue eyes.

"It must be fascinating to own mines."

"Well, I'll own plenty some day," declared David. He was feeling suddenly the old sensation of dizzy weakness. The room had grown very warm.

"Won't you ladies come and have a lemonade or something with me on the piazza?" he proposed at last.

"With pleasure, my husband is sitting out there. You must meet him."

The girl rose deliberately and, with finely tapering fingers, smoothed her white skirt. Then she and her mother walked with David out of the room.

The music was jigging again. Everyone stared at the three, as they passed. But unaware of curiosity or gossip, David strode joyfully beside the girl.

The night air was damp and sweet. The piazza, lit in a ghostly way by the green Japanese lanterns, looked cool and mysterious. Huddled in a chair, his feet propped on the railing sat a tall emaciated

man, who glanced up at Mrs. Earle's approach. Although the night was warm, he wore a heavy ulster, fastened high round his throat. In the dim lantern light, his face seemed green and wasting away.

"James, I want you to meet Mr. Ghent," murmured Mrs. Earle.

"Glad to meet you, sir," said David cordially. "Have a drink with us, won't you?"

"Well, thank you, no," answered James Earle in a chronically patient voice. There was a scrape of chairs as they all settled down in a small circle.

David ordered lemonade for the mother and daughter and another drink of Scotch for himself.

Then he bent deferentially towards the older man.

"I hear you're a mining man, sir," he began.

Mrs. Earle sat back from the pallor of lantern light, her matronly figure in shadow. The girl leaned forward, her little pointed chin drooping. The perfect oval of her face shone like a flower from the dusk. The two men chatted together. Mr. Earle seemed glad to have someone to talk to.

"We don't live much anywhere," he said sadly, in the course of conversation. "Lucia likes gay places. But we can't afford fashionable ones."

"Father!" murmured the girl.

"It's nothing against us," he continued querulously. "Now is it, Mr. Ghent?"

"Well, I guess not." David's voice was emphatic.

He was so happy that he could have sat talking to the father and staring at the girl all night, with no

nand. "Good night, Mr. G

"May I see you to-morr
looking at the mother.

"Why, of course," said
"I'll be glad to have another

"Yes, indeed," echoed his

When they had left him, I
ing after them. Mr. Earle
on his wife's arm. Lucia drif

Then when he could no long
and looked out at the dusky sil
night. As he breathed the a
and the spice of the dark,
seemed to have new and subtl
himself wonderingly, over and
loved this girl.

CHAPTER XII

NOW in the space of night, life changed for David Ghent. He entered a world which was a sanctuary in which men like himself were unashamed to kneel. He loved this blue eyed girl who trod proudly like a young queen, and whose thin lipped smile was mysterious as that of a madonna. He loved her and with immediate confidence, determined that she should be his wife. He would make her happy; he would slave for the satisfying of her every wish. Her family should be his family.

He understood only one way of winning her; that was to go direct at it with swift masterful simplicity; to show her, her parents and the world his honest intentions. He therefore at once proceeded to offer her his time, his resources and the eager energy of his returning health.

Mrs. Earle seemed benignantly disposed. She soon allowed him privileges, delicately indicated as such. He could walk with Lucia, talk to her alone and dance with her. He could give Mr. Earle cigars and chat with him by the hour. He could run errands for Mrs. Earle and offer her his arm when, as every evening before supper, she walked up and down the piazza. He could also, by his friendship with Sam McKew, secure for them comforts not included on the hotel bill.

A week of delight passed like a dream. He had attained a boyish familiarity with the girl. He was now ever at her side, obeying the slightest look of her blue eyes, grateful for the faintest smile from her thin pink lips. For him, she seemed to shine as she walked beside him or sat pensively on the piazza, her hands folded in her lap, her wheat colored hair framing the oval of her face.

Keenly observant of certain things, he noticed that she and her mother dressed very simply. The girl owned few gowns and no jewelry. Yet like all women she must love pretty things. This was proved by her attempts at furbishing a slim wardrobe with cleverly employed accessories — a chiffon veil covering a hat, a scarf draped over a dress, a bow of ribbon pinned at the waist.

His longing grew, to serve her, to surround her with the best of everything. He was not a man to delay or hide these longings and would have confessed at once his love for her, had she not, by many feminine methods eluded a definite declaration from him.

One day he invited her and her father and mother to go on a picnic.

They would take the lunch with them and drive to the woods. He hoped that he could manage to see Lucia alone, and tell her bravely of his love.

He was up early in the morning and went himself to the Hotel kitchen. "That lunch has got to be just right," he told the good natured matronly cook.

Sam McKew, on a morning inspection, found him hovering over the basket, sampling freshly made cakes and poking the cold chicken to see if it was tender.

"Been pretty busy lately, haven't you?" Sam remarked jovially.

"Well, yes, I have," admitted David.

Sam McKew chuckled. "Someone was asking me about you the other day."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Earle. I told her that if you weren't a millionaire now, you would be some day. That's the talk she was after," said Sam slyly.

"You did! Fine!" David grinned and sauntered out of the kitchen, his hand on Sam's shoulder.

It was ten o'clock. He lounged on the piazza, waiting for the Earle family to appear, but they were late. A four seated carriage stood at the door; the two horses hung long necks and sniffed at the gravel. Morning life in the hotel fluttered gayly. Young girls dressed crisply in white tripped out and away on various quests of amusement. As they passed David they stared at him invitingly. He had gained importance in their eyes now that he was Lucia's property. But he looked at none of them.

Pompous fathers and husbands sat heavily in chairs on the piazza and unfolded their morning papers. Their wives in stiff, clean linens, settled themselves comfortably to some morning task of embroidery or fine sewing.

Finally, David, no longer able to curb his impa-

through the open transom.

The voice belonged to Mrs. Earl
never have imagined that it could be
shrill, so hard.

"You'll do what I think best, l
"We must find out first . . ."

Without waiting to hear more
walked quickly away.

When he reached the piazza, he
the end of a big unlit cigar and frown

He told himself that all women
nervous and high strung. Mrs. Earl
only indulging in a natural feminine
But he wished that he had not heard
did not like to think any ordinary
gling possible in that family.

When, however, a few minutes la
down and joined him, he was almost
lieve that he had imagined the unpl
Mrs. Earle, matronly and dignified,

"I hope we haven't kept you waiting too long," said Mrs. Earle politely.

"No, indeed. It's all right," answered David and busied himself helping them in to the carriage and tucking the rugs around Mr. Earle's sharp knees. The girl sat in the front seat beside him.

Then David forgot everything else in the world, because this girl sat beside him and smiled.

He clucked to the horses who ambled away. The morning smelt sweetly of blooms and sap. The roads were wide and smooth, ribbed with heavy shadows.

"I've never been so happy!" said David.

In a gloveless hand the girl balanced a light pink parasol. It swayed over her head like a coral colored butterfly.

He looked admiringly at the hand, which was small, with pointed fingers and shining nails. She had, on the little finger a pretty diamond and pearl ring that flashed in the sunshine. It was the most valuable jewel he had ever seen her wear and he thought it so becoming that he decided she should have many more such baubles.

Every once and a while he turned and questioned the mother and father.

"All right back there, Mrs. Earle?"

"Enough rugs for you, sir?"

Their pleasant affirmatives spared him any worry on their account.

He felt a delightful and warm responsibility for these three people, as if their joy and comfort de-

jolted over unev
and once slipped into a small di

Lucia clutched at his arm.

" Oh, I wouldn't let anything
assured her and laid the whip l
patient horses, who pulled with
the carriage. But at the touch
that was almost pain darted throu

At last they reached a clearing
table fairy circle, surrounded b
carpeted with moss, dappled in sh
and furnished with big stones sha

David tethered the horses and
for the comfort of his guests. T
for them, the mother and father
riage, while Lucia flitted among

David spread rugs, put cushions
and started to unpack the provi
the mother languidly called out:

" Lucia, you might help Mr. (

" Oh, of course "

among the rugs and cushions, their backs against a sloping rock.

Then they began to eat.

During the lunch, Mrs. Earle questioned David about his boyhood, without, however, obtaining from him much satisfaction. He spoke only once or twice of his mother and grandmother, but he did not mention his father or why he had left home. He never could speak or think of his father, so deep, so undying, was the resentment he cherished against the grim old tyrant.

"So you're really English," observed Mrs. Earle, thoughtfully nibbling at her cold chicken.

"I guess I'm more American," said David.

Lucia shook her head decidedly. "It's much nicer being English."

"Americans are good enough for me," returned David. "Why, what I am or ever will be, I'll have America to thank for."

"Country life in England is so charming," remarked Mrs. Earle. "Those old houses and gardens. . . . Didn't you say you lived in the country, Mr. Ghent?"

"Yes, I did."

"I wonder," pursued that lady carelessly, "I wonder now if you ever met Sir Edward Trelby. Do you remember Sir Edward, James?"

"I believe I do, my dear," said Mr. Earle, looking vague. "Wasn't he the man we met on the boat?"

"Oh, dear, no! We met him last winter at Mrs. Laddon Smith's."

"I wasn't along then," observed Mr. Earle, and his blue tired eyes met David's keen, attentive glance.

"I don't know Sir Edward," said David politely. "I left England when I was a kid, you know."

"Well, I'd like to live over there," declared Lucia, patting her pink muslin skirt. "America's so ordinary nowadays."

"Oh, don't say that!" cried David, looking at her eagerly. "It's the best place in the world, Miss Lucia. If a fellow's got anything good in him; he has some chance here. But they're a lot of snobs in England."

"Well, they have family to be proud of," murmured Mrs. Earle. "Of course originally ALL my family were English."

"Is that so? Well, I guess you seem American enough," said David.

Mrs. Earle drew herself up stiffly and the girl laughed.

"That won't please Mamma, Mr. Ghent. You're much more American than the people who are born here."

They had finished lunch, David jumped to his feet and stood firmly silhouetted against the sky.

"I guess that suits me. Say, don't you people want to take a walk? I know a cute little wood path near here."

Mrs. Earle leaned back among the cushions. "I really couldn't. You and Lucia go, if you want to," she said languidly.

David offered his hand to the girl who was still seated, and swung her lightly to her feet.

"Will you come with me, Miss Lucia?"

"Yes, indeed I will."

As they walked away together down the little path, silence fell between them. The woods were very quiet, except, now and then for the scurrying retreat of a small animal. Branches of trees hung low and fragrant over the path which was just broad enough for two. David walked slowly beside Lucia who bent sometimes to pick a spray of maiden hair fern.

"I've never known a girl like you," he said at last.

"Haven't you?" Her smile was elusive.

"I've never known any girls, really," he went on slowly. "I've missed lots of nice things." He was walking nearer to her now. His face was tense and eager, his voice low. She looked like a lovely pink flower drifting down the path.

"I'm going to be a rich man some day . . . and I want a girl . . . just like you, to make it worth my while," he said.

She glanced at him demurely. "That won't be hard to find."

He put out a hand and touched her arm. "Listen here, kid, is there any chance?"

They had reached another little clearing, where the log of a fallen tree offered itself as a bench. The place was like a chapel, hushed and holy.

David sat on the log and drew the girl down beside him. She avoided his eyes and played nervously with the ring on her little finger.

"Will you be my wife, girlie?" he said very gently.

She stared at him, a strange unawakened look in her blue eyes.

He became suddenly intense. "I swear to God, girlie, if you'll only love me, I'll make it my life's work to give you everything . . . everything you want."

"How can I know? I don't really know anything about you . . ." murmured the girl.

"There isn't much to know! I ran away from home, when I was a kid. But I've never done anything I could be ashamed of."

"You ran away!"

"Yes, I did," said David slowly. "And I'd do it again, if it was to do. My mother and grandmother died. There was only my father left. As far as that goes, he's dead too . . . for me. He didn't treat my mother right . . . he didn't treat me right either. Oh, don't let's talk of *him* any more, girlie. . . . I love you so." He touched her hand reverently. She gave a sudden nervous gesture of retreat. "You needn't be afraid of me," he continued. "I wouldn't hurt you, any more than I would my own sister if I had one."

A beam of sunshine drifted down to her pale hair and lit it to a celestial aura around her face. She smiled faintly, with subtle change of expression in her eyes.

"I'm not afraid of you," she said.

"I guess not."

"And I think," she spoke in a low voice, "I think you're the nicest man I ever met."

"You mean that you love me," he cried, and seized both her hands in his. "Now listen to me . . . I'm no good at fancy words . . . see? But I tell you, dearie. You're going to love me . . . and you're going to marry me mighty soon. What do you think of that?"

"Oh, I haven't promised you anything," she murmured, leaving her hands in his grasp.

He felt buoyant as if the world were his, as if he were strong enough to lift her, to carry her to the ends of the earth. "You leave that to me, kid."

She began to laugh nervously. "My, but you jump at conclusions."

He laughed with her. "And I land too. Now what do you say to that?"

They had both risen and stood facing one another.

She looked at him with a little challenging smile. "I won't promise you . . . anything."

"Won't you?" cried David. "What about this?" He caught her suddenly in his arms and crushed her to him in an uncontrollable gesture of mastery. "Now whose are you?"

She began to tremble, and he tightened his hold. Then she buried her face in the rough tweed of his coat, so that he might not see her eyes.

"Girlie, my own sweetheart . . . no one can take you from me."

Very gently he put a hand beneath her chin and tilted back her head, so that he might look and find

an answer. Her cheeks were as pink as her dress; there was a languorous droop to her eyelids; her lips seemed to have grown more arched, fuller.

"Lord! You little beauty!" he said. His voice had grown warm and deep.

"Let me go . . . David . . . let me go!"

"Why?"

"Because . . ." she struggled a little. Neither of them knew with what forces they played.

He bent and savored her lips which were sweet and young. "Yes, sweetheart, I'll let you go . . . if you come back again." He released her, smiling now, as a man smiles when he loves and has held his young love close.

But Lucia looked suddenly ready to cry. "How could you! You'll never respect me now! Never!" And forlorn she turned away.

"Respect you! silly child to talk so! Haven't I a right to kiss my future wife?"

"But I hadn't promised."

"Oh, yes, you had! Listen, sweetheart, we'll go right back and tell your mother."

"Oh, we won't do that," she spoke quickly. "We won't do that, David."

"But why not?"

"Oh, she'd ask questions and interfere . . . and . . . oh, well . . . promise me you won't say anything!"

She turned pleadingly toward David like a child asking a favor. For a moment he looked troubled, as if he did not understand.

"Promise," she persisted.

"Oh, anything you like!" he cried then and would have caught her in his arms again, but, with a little relieved sigh she eluded him and, fleet of foot, like a young nymph, fled from him down the path. He ran after her and in a few strides had caught up to her.

She was breathing quickly and laughing in a nervous way.

"You can't escape me," he said.

"Oh, well . . . I haven't really tried . . . yet!"

Whereupon they walked together, hand in hand, through the scented wood paths and David was happy.

When they neared the clearing where the father and mother waited, Lucia dropped his hand and said remindingly:

"Not a word to mother."

"Very well, dearie," he promised.

Mr. Earle was asleep. He lay, his back propped up against an oak tree, his shoulders and long legs covered by rugs. Mrs. Earle sat beside him, embroidering a teacloth.

When she saw David and Lucia she rose, smoothed out her white skirt and came towards them.

"Well, you must have taken a long walk," she said, and darted a swift, interrogative glance at her daughter.

"Yes, we did," answered Lucia innocently.

"I think we'd better be going home." Mrs. Earle spoke with sudden decision.

David ran across the clearing to where the horses were tethered.

"In a minute, ma'am," he sang out.

The two women stood under the tree, whispering; Mr. Earle, with inarticulate grunts and yawns began to awaken.

The day settled in subtly sensuous shadows. Light sank and deepened, bloomed in velvety pinks, laid long veils of pansy color over the country.

Then suddenly, as David was packing the basket and rugs in the carriage the girl gave a short cry of dismay.

"Oh, my ring!"

"What is it?"

"What did you lose?"

In a second she was surrounded by Mr. Earle, David and her mother, who had grown pinched of lip.

"My ring!" wailed the girl, and held up her thin, small left hand. The pearl and diamond ring was indeed missing.

"When did you last notice it?" the father asked, beginning a vague hunt on the moss.

"You're so careless, Lucia," said Mrs. Earle in a sharp voice.

"Oh! we'll find it," David cried.

The girl seemed overcome with distress. "Where could I have lost it?" she kept saying and looked at David as if dimly blaming him for something.

"I told you not to wear it," snapped the mother. "That was a family ring, Mr. Ghent. You under-

stand, it cannot be replaced. You never will listen to me, Lucia."

The women's voices had grown shrill, their faces worried. The girl started shaking out her pink skirt and her veil.

They all hunted now among the rugs, in the basket, in the moss; they looked through the carriage. They hunted with bent heads, like Indians seeking a trail, stepping cautiously and stooping once in a while to pick up bits of twigs and stones which had seemed to gleam, only to throw them down as useless, and go on hunting.

Lucia started in a wild way up the path from which she and David had just come.

"You'll never find it," called Mr. Earle after her. "It's growing damp. I can't stay here much longer, Lucia. You may as well give it up."

"It's all very well for you to talk, James," said his wife coldly. "But that was my mother's ring, and I'd like to have it."

"I realize that, my dear, but it's like hunting in a haystack," said Mr. Earle soothingly, picking his way carefully back towards the carriage, his shoulders bent, his eyes fixed on the ground.

"It was so pretty," murmured Lucia to David, who had joined her.

She was almost in tears. Her face had grown flushed, her eyes were bright, her mouth was only a thin hair line of pink.

"It's hopeless," she sighed. Her pink dress was stained at the knees, from kneeling on the moss.

David whispered to her. "Never mind, girlie.

I'll buy you another. I'll buy you all the rings you can wear . . . on fingers and toes."

"How can you joke?" She turned to him in a small whirlwind of vexation.

"I'm not joking. I'll buy you another one, dearie," he assured her with tender concern.

She stopped suddenly in the middle of the path and looked at him.

"Oh! no, you can't." Then she bent again to the task, peering through bushes and fumbling in clumps of maidenhair fern.

"You're not going to find that ring," said David gently.

Her father was calling. "Lucia. . . . Lucia. . . ."

She turned drearily and went back, David beside her.

The drive home was a gloomy one for all except David, whose heart was big and singing with happiness and love. He could not feel the loss of the ring other than an incident. But a pale Lucia sat beside him, who would not smile even when he whispered comfort to her. "Don't worry, sweetheart. You shall have all the rings you want."

Mr. Earle sat in the back seat, shivering. "I've caught cold," he complained from time to time. Once he sneezed, and there was unconcealed and childish pleasure in the way with which, for the rest of the drive he kept muttering: "You see, I knew it! I've caught cold."

Mrs. Earle did not even answer him.

The horses jogged peacefully along the quiet road back to the hotel.

"Shall I see you to-night, dearie?" whispered David. "There's a dance, you know."

"It depends on mother," answered the girl. "She may not let me come down."

When they drove up to the door of the Hotel, it was nearly supper time. Young girls dressed for the dance balanced themselves hazardously on the piazza railing, with an innocent display of silk stockings and patent leather slippers. A few young men trod the length of the piazza, as if it were a ship's deck.

Everyone stared at David and the Earle family; they stared at David as he helped Mrs. Earle down from the carriage, and then Mr. Earle and then Lucia; and continued staring meaningly as David and Lucia stepped a little aside and whispered together.

"Dearest, to-night?" said David.

"Do be careful. Everyone's gaping at us," she returned a trifle acidly. "I don't think Mother will let me come down to-night."

Mrs. Earle thanked him for the day, but it was evident that graciousness on her part was an effort. David saw them disappear up the stairs with the doleful intuition that he would not see Lucia again that evening.

They did not even come down to supper. So he haunted the ballroom for a while, until hope of seeing Lucia had fled. Then he wandered out into the night. The blaze of lights, the tinkle of music,

had no message for him without Lucia. Obeying an impulse he found his way to the side of the house, where were the Earles' rooms. Lights glowed behind the drawn curtains. There he stood like any lovelorn troubadour looking up and hoping that Lucia might come to the window. But she did not. Then he imagined her, drifting to and fro in the room, with a sway of her lithe figure, her wheat-colored hair shining in the light; and all the night, the vast quiet sky, the prickling points of stars, the scent of magnolia trees was not more intense than this vision of her.

As he stood in the shadows, staring up at the closed shades, he asked himself aloud:

"Am I worthy?"

Passing his life in rapid review, he could find nothing unclean or unfair; yet still he did not feel worthy. But unchecked and strong, the longings and dreams of his starved youth, the romantic spirit which is in all men, the will to conquer a chosen mate, rushed mightily to his heart. He drew a deep breath, squared his shoulders and held his head high.

Back of the closed windows, behind the drawn curtains, Lucia and Mrs. Earle were talking in slightly raised, angry voices.

They argued late into the night.

CHAPTER XIII

DAVID had not learned any subtleties of courtship. He loved Lucia. It had therefore seemed natural to tell her so; it would also seem natural to marry her at once, since he had vowed faith, loyalty, and all the single directed reverence of which he was capable. She had indeed entered definitely into his life as its supreme illusion. For to such men as he, the chosen woman mounts high the fair throne of an ideal. There she sits, whether she will or no, immutable, in spotless garments, wearing the aureole of an eternal child, with the eyes of a Madonna and the heart of an honest man. God keep her soul, some say!

But to love, to have declared his love, even to have coaxed a shy answer thereto, unfortunately did not appear to bring about fulfillment of what should have been a simple situation. In the days that followed the picnic, there were many things that David did not understand.

The girl Lucia was more elusive than ever and evaded, with sweet assumption of ingenuousness, any further consequences of David's proposal. For a few days she managed to avoid being alone with him. Flanked by her mother and father, she smiled from afar,— a smile that perplexed and maddened him by its inexplicable aloofness. Yet there were

other moments when her face changed wondrously, when her look became a sweet message, and the baffling innocence of her eyes melted in strange blue fires offered to the passion of his constant and mutely questioning gaze.

He stood this pretty game of hide and go seek just so long. Then he grew restive, for he was strong enough now to leave Lake Grove, and he could not indeed afford a much longer rest.

The energy which had pushed him forward to his present state of being, now claimed further rights, fretting and whispering strenuous counsel. He made up his mind briskly that Lucia should be his wife at once, for since he intended to marry her he saw no reason for waiting. A girl's enigmatic smile was after all bad food for a man like himself. So he began to brood and lay plans to gain from her some binding promise. An obscure instinct, however, warned him not to count on the father and mother as valuable allies. Mrs. Earle was always gracious and benign enough. But as Sam McKew one day, over a friendly drink, remarked shrewdly: "Say, the young one's all right, Davy. But the mother's a deep one. Go slow, my boy."

Although David would not acknowledge that Mrs. Earle was of an intriguing nature, he could not help feeling in many ways her constant unobtrusive vigilance, which, if anything seemed to be accentuated since the picnic.

His impatience and longing augmented with the difficulties placed so delicately in his way. He

wanted to win this girl now, more than he had ever wanted anything in his life.

One evening, there was a dance at the Hotel. In outward trimming and festal sound, it differed in no way from the occasion upon which he had first met Lucia. But now there was a quiet, unspoken ownership in his attitude as he entered the ballroom with her, swaying tall and proud beside him.

When he danced with her, he clasped her in his arms, as one clasps a joy. Then to the rheumatic wheeze of violin and piano, in perfect step, they circled beneath the bright lights of the room. The other dancing couples counted no more than Autumn leaves blown around them by a capricious breeze.

Said he: "Girl, I love you!"

Said she: "Hush!"

He steered her in the room, where he chose to go.

Said he: "Look at me, my sweetheart." She looked in a sidelong way.

"Behave yourself, David. Mother can see us."

"Let her!"

"Do be careful, David."

They whirled on once more round the room.

"Lucia, I want to talk to you."

"Well, it seems to me you are talking."

"I mean alone."

"We can't . . . now."

He held her tighter to him and bent to whisper in her ear as they danced.

"You must."

"Do be reasonable."

"I am reasonable." He guided her towards the

door of the ballroom. "We're going to slip out while nobody's looking, and take a stroll. Your mother's not watching us . . . it's warm to-night . . . come with me, dearest."

They reached the door. Suddenly, with a quick movement he drew her into the hall. The waltz thrummed on.

"Come quickly," he said. She drew back a moment, but he took her arm masterfully. "Say, you didn't used to be afraid to see me alone," he said looking at her intently.

"I'm not afraid." Then she followed him.

He led the way to the piazza, down the steps and out into the warm night. She drew the scarf around her throat and stole along without further word. Behind them, the lanterns on the piazza blinked softly, the tinkle of a violin dribbled from the open window, as if it were following them, still bidding them to the dance.

David walked close to the girl without touching her. She seemed to float beside him, a veiled sweet virgin, with lowered blue eyes and thin secretive lips.

They paced down a dark, narrow path, bordered by magnolia trees. Sounds from the Hotel reached them faintly. They seemed lost in the night, among grass, bushes and trees that smelt poignantly, in darkness which cloaked their youth with mystery.

Suddenly David bent and folded the girl in his arms.

"I love you," he said. He breathed in quick, short gasps and held her as a cradle holds a child,

as a lover a rose or his beloved, as if he would never let her go. Then there in the dark, a subtle electric current that seemed to come from themselves from the night, from desire, swirled in intangible twining waves around them, holding them sentient and still. David's eyes grew bright, his lips tightened. He bent and kissed her again and felt her tremble, as if she had no more will, no more youth. Suddenly he thrust her away from him.

"My darling . . . my sweetheart," he said. "You wouldn't let me kiss you like that if you didn't love me, would you?"

She swayed and put a bewildered hand up to her forehead.

"Oh . . . David!"

"I want you to marry me . . . I want you to be my wife right away," he said passionately. "Don't you see that it's got to be, dearest?" The scarf had slipped from her head. He could see vaguely the pure line of her neck.

"Now, you're going to listen to me," he said. "Either we tell your mother to-night, or we get married at once without telling her."

"Oh . . . no! We can't tell her . . . yet."

"But we've GOT to," he said.

"No . . . no!"

He spoke in the voice he might have used to a child. "Well, dearie, I tell you I'm going to marry you right away."

"You're crazy," she whispered.

"I'm going to Detroit on the eight o'clock train to-morrow morning," he continued deliberately.

"You'll take the nine o'clock and meet me there. We'll get married. Then you can tell mother when you want. At least I'll know that no one can take you from me."

"I've never heard of such an impossible thing," she murmured and began to laugh nervously.

"I'll love you as no woman ever was loved," said David solemnly. "I'll make a queen of you, dearie. I'll work for you, slave for you, give you everything. Won't you trust me?"

"Mother wouldn't let me go to Detroit."

"Yes, she would. You told me you had a friend there!"

"Yes, but . . ."

"There aren't any buts," cried David masterfully. "You'll go and visit your friend. You'll lunch with her. . . . Only, my dear blessed girlie, you'll be Mrs. David Ghent. Now, what do you say to that?"

"Oh, I can't," whispered the girl, but her voice revealed a tremor of suppressed excitement.

"I'll meet you at the station," he insisted.

"I won't come!"

"Yes, you will, my dearest."

She drew her scarf over her hair and half turned away from him. "My, but you're obstinate."

"I like to know where I stand in things," said David.

"Well, you usually do, don't you?"

"Yes, I usually do." His voice was steady. "I always thought I'd marry this way . . . no fuss or circus about it . . . just the girl and me."

"It's crazy," sighed Lucia. "You don't know Mother. She'd be wild. Why, she's made plans way ahead for me."

"She'll have to change them then," said David buoyantly. "At any rate she can be told when we think fit."

"Well, she'll be mad," said the girl.

A silence fell between them. Shadows crept envelopingly, shrouding the slim white figure of the girl, trailing over David's face and shoulders. There was the whirring of insects in the dewy grass, the cry of a night bird, the murky passage of a bat, the stir of dusky things.

As betrothal, David kissed Lucia upon her brow, then slowly again upon her lips.

"My little wife to be. We must go back now."

They turned and walked slowly towards the Hotel. Lucia clung to his arm. She seemed subdued and vanquished by his will.

The lantern lights shone like low hung stars; light from the ballroom streamed out spilling over the shadows; the music was still tinkling.

David laid his hand on hers. "To-morrow take the nine o'clock train, sweetheart."

"Oh, David. Suppose Mother won't let me?"

"She must."

A tall, stooping silhouette loomed suddenly in the path ahead of them.

"It's Father!" She left David and ran forward.

Mr. Earle peered into the dark. "That you,

Lucia? Been for a stroll? Good-evening, Mr. Ghent."

"Good-evening, sir!" said David cordially.

Lucia snuggled up to her father and whispered in his ear.

He coughed and answered audibly: "I'll see about it, Lucia."

They reached the Hotel and loitered on the gravel driveway below the piazza, when Mr. Earle suddenly called in a curiously high pitched voice: "Here we are, Sarah."

Mrs. Earle stood on the piazza, staring out into the night. She held her black skirt in one hand, and with the other fanned herself with a black spangled fan. "I wondered where you were," she said a trifle acidly.

David noticed that Lucia jogged her Father's arm.

"We've been for a stroll," said James Earle.

She came forward then to join them. "I was looking for you, Lucia."

"I thought you knew where I was," answered Lucia innocently.

"Won't you come out with us and have another stroll?" suggested David.

"No, thank you. It's getting late. Lucia, you'll ruin your slippers. It's time we all went to bed."

Lucia moved gracefully under the subdued glow of lanterns.

David looking at her, marveled at her instant control and poise. Her hair had remained tidy, her

cheeks were cool, her eyes untroubled. She seemed a candid child.

"Good-night, Mr. Ghent," she said sweetly, offering him her small, thin hand.

"Good-night. To-morrow," he ventured in a low voice.

She smiled evasively. "Perhaps . . ." and drifted away, followed by her mother and father.

David went to his room and flung open the window. The night air entered as a friend.

The distant jingle of a waltz mounted plaintively, like something small and sad trying to be merry when all around it was quiet.

David listening to it, imagined Lucia dancing.

It made him think of all the music he had ever heard . . . the song of the sailors on the *Jackson*, crossing to Australia, the blare of music in a restaurant to which Sullivan had once taken him in San Francisco; the crude music in mining camps, a piano out of tune, an accordion, the rough chant of men's voices, and now this, the music to which he and Lucia danced.

Then all his life paced before him gravely.

He saw his grandmother Arnold sitting on the old stone bench under the elm tree telling tales of chivalry; he saw the pastel portrait of his mother in the deserted room, looking like a pale, sad princess in a tower; he saw Isabella, the mare, fleet of foot, Mrs. Dollinge and his father in an ugly spasm of rage. He saw the old woman by the well who had given him food, the flaccid, mean-tongued cook on the *Jackson*, Peter Crewe, Betty and dear old

Dan Sullivan from whom he had not heard for many a day.

He saw Stone Valley and Father Dunlap, the priest, to whom he had not written for months. He saw Butte, a grim battle field and Henry Lynham, impassive; and bearded, gentle faces of "pals." Then he saw Lucia.

These things sped in a train of pictures, fragments of sound, a blurred retrospection of his life as he had climbed step by step, beside other men. There had been no women like Lucia. She was unique.

Suddenly he closed the window and went to his trunk. On the top tray lay a little box . . . the same, worn and blackened, that Mrs. Dollinge had thrust into his hand, the day of his grandmother's death.

He opened it now reverently. There lay the few simple trinkets, all that was left of his youth and family.

He took from the box his mother's wedding ring. It would be small enough for Lucia's thin young finger. The gold was worn. The ring weighed nothing in his hand. Yet as he held it, its tiny circle enclosed all the mystery of the universe, fitted the raised forefinger of a secret. In the circle turned countless couples, hand in hand; from the circle rose wails and laughter. All the illusion, the irony, the eternal and the temporary hopes of lovers, all the law, all of sacred womanhood, and the bitter revilings of outcasts, all the wistfulness of those who were lonely and the smug comfort of those who

were warm, all the turning of humanity, groping for solution of the insoluble, all of life was contained in this one ring.

And David saw in it only a wedding ring . . . with Lucia wearing it . . .

CHAPTER XIV

IT was on a Thursday, the 16th of August.

David was up early in the morning and waiting at the little station for the train to take him to Detroit. It seemed to him as if all the world were a blaze of glory. The air was warm and soft. Dew still glistened fairy-like on the grass and on bushes; the sky deepened from light to turquoise blue. A wilted looking rose bush tried to flower near a picket fence. Two fragile pale pink roses were hidden away among many seared leaves. A few small trunks had been tumbled and forgotten on the station platform. The Station-master, a languid, red-nosed man, lounged among them, as if he had nothing else to do.

"Fine day," observed David in a cheerful voice.

The Station master chewed reflectively and squinted at the sky.

"Well, it seems to be," he said without much interest.

"Have a cigar?" David held out a generously filled case.

The Station master peered at it.

"Don't mind if I do, thank you." He chose a cigar carefully, bit off the end and stood staring up the track.

David, his hands in his pockets, whistled tunelessly.

By and by, a listless little train jogged into the station and stood chugging and steaming, like a small boy playing at engine.

David nodded to the Stationmaster, shouted a cheery "Good-morning," and jumped in a car as if his body were of no more weight than his spirits.

It was a way train and meandered through the country like an old man taking an early morning stroll. David sat impatiently measuring the time. He could have wished the hours to whirl by, bringing swifter fulfillment of his dear desire.

His daring began to appear to him in its just proportions. Suppose Lucia should not come to Detroit this morning. At mere thought of such a possibility, his very heartstrings tightened, until he could hardly breathe. But he chased the idea, telling himself, with royal confidence, that she was fated to come. He willed it so of her. He touched his mother's wedding ring which was fastened to his watch chain. Soon he would slip the little circlet on Lucia's finger. How happy his mother would be, were she alive!

While he was dreaming, the train fussed its way into Detroit. David like any moon-struck swain found himself in the strange city without definite plans. Nothing daunted, he discovered a pleasant faced policeman and asked where he could find a minister. The policeman grinned.

"Going to get married?"

David smiled brightly. "Yes, I am."

"Any particular religion?"

"Oh, I guess Presbyterian will do," said David. Lucia was a Presbyterian.

Accordingly the policeman gave him a name and address, and, because he was man enough to sympathize with a happy lover, he called out after David: "Good luck!"

David moved briskly away and next went to a flower shop, where he ordered a bunch of pink roses to be sent to the minister's house. Then he telephoned to the holy man who was still at breakfast.

After that, he lounged about the streets, looking at his watch every few minutes. As the hour drew near of Lucia's arrival, he became more nervous. The waiting was almost more than he could bear. So he did what many a man would have done — he entered a near-by saloon and ordered a drink.

He asked himself over and over again — Would she come after all! Then he thought of the night before, of her half frightened, evasive promise, of her blue eyes, her smile, the touch of her lips, and it seemed to him that she must come.

"Oh, Lord! If she doesn't I'll be likely to go and fetch her," he groaned softly.

Half an hour before the train was due, he was back at the station, waiting as a man waits who has laid high stakes on a race.

He could not keep still, but strode up and down the platform a lean, tense muscled figure, his head sunk forward, his hands in his pockets, a big cigar between his teeth.

When the train appeared, rambling slowly along

the track, with wheezing sighs and whistles, he threw away the mangled cigar and rushed forward to the edge of the platform. His gray eyes looked out with sharp pin points of light in their pupils.

The first car trundled by, but for him its windows were empty, since they did not frame her face. Then the train snorted and slowed to a standstill. People streamed from it, spilled on to the platform and tripped off in different directions. There was no Lucia.

He began to look crestfallen and pitiful, when all at once he saw her coming towards him slowly. She was dressed in pink and wore a wreath of roses on her hat. Then he sprang forward, with a great release from intolerable uncertainty and a visibly exultant claim of her in his greeting.

"I knew you'd come," he said.

"Well, but that doesn't mean . . ." she began.

He seized her arm masterfully. "Doesn't it? Well, now doesn't it? My Pretty, we'll see about that!"

Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes very bright. "My, what an adventure!" she exclaimed, glancing up at him coquettishly. "Think of me, in an old pink dress, getting married . . . like this."

"You're beautiful," he said fervently, and tucking her arm in his, hurried her from the station into the street.

"I had an awful time getting away from Mamma. I told her I was going to see Mabel Smith, my friend," she said.

"We'll see Mabel, all right," cried David. "But first, we're going to get married."

"Oh, David, not right away. You're only fooling," she clutched his arm nervously.

He laughed aloud in his great joy. "You leave everything to me."

Then he helped her into a carriage and gave the name of the minister.

"We're going right away now, darling. What do you say to that?"

She gave a little gasp and a flutter. "I don't know what to say, David. I never thought I would marry you."

"Well, you're going to," he whispered.

When the carriage stopped in front of the minister's house, just off the Grand Circus Park, she began to giggle helplessly. "David, I'm frightened out of my wits."

He squeezed her hand very tightly. "Not of me, sweetheart?"

It was a neat little house, with crisp tidy curtains in the window, and a highly polished brass bell, which David rang with a will.

A young, shy-voiced servant girl came to the door and ushered them into the parlor . . . a stuffy looking room furnished in red plush, with various ornaments and edifying pictures placed decorously on the mantelpiece and walls. A small harmonium stood in the corner. Lucia flitted across the floor.

"It smells of cooking in here," she commented flippantly. The sudden lightness of her manner surprised David, who had grown very quiet.

"Oh, David, do look at this china child wheeling a barrow and this Japanese toy that wags its head."

"They look all right to me," said David soberly.

She pouted an instant and darted over to him with a bird-like gesture.

"Oh, Davy, this isn't a funeral, is it? Don't be so serious."

He took her hand gently. "Little girl, it's the happiest day of my life."

Her hand was icy cold, her eyes restless. "I'm frightened out of my wits," she murmured.

Soon the minister, the Rev. Timothy Prawn, opened the door and came into the room, peering at Lucia and David through a pair of tortoise-rimmed spectacles. He was a short, puffy-cheeked man, who kept rubbing his hands and smiling benevolently.

David stepped forward and introduced himself and Lucia.

"Well, well!" said the Rev. Timothy Prawn. "Glad to meet you, Sir. When I marry young people like you I feel young again myself."

"You look it, Sir," answered David heartily.

The little clergyman raised a hand in arch protest and smiled at Lucia.

"Not so young as I was. But I can at least, always appreciate these happy occasions."

Lucia said: "Yes, indeed," and looked vague.

"My two girls will be witnesses, if you don't mind," proposed the Reverend Timothy. "It is often their happy privilege . . . will you excuse me a moment?"

He trotted out again into the hall and cried, "Hope, my dear, Grace — will you come down to the parlor?"

Lucia moved nearer to David. "I'm so nervous I could scream," she whispered. "I never thought I would do this, David."

He looked at her with steadfast, tender eyes. "Do you love me, sweetheart?"

"It looks as if I did," she murmured. "Oh, Davy, what funny little girls."

Hope and Grace Prawn walked solemnly into the room behind their father. They were about fifteen years old and wore stiffly starched brown gingham dresses; their flaxen hair was braided in tight pigtails that stuck out behind their round applecheeked faces. They gazed at Lucia with expressionless gray eyes.

"My, how they stare!" she whispered to David.

But David was not thinking of the two little girls, nor of the minister, nor of the room, nor indeed of anything in the world, except the sacred wonderful fact, that Lucia would soon be his wife. A great, tender sense of responsibility stirred in his heart. He looked at her, with the promise of wide untried things.

He seemed to hear his grandmother, on her death bed, telling him —

"Never betray . . . never by any fault of yours, make a woman weep."

He knew that he would never make Lucia weep.

As he stood now before the minister to be married, his face was rigid and solemn. He felt as if

this moment were ordained; as if everything he had ever thought or been, all the finest chivalry of his manhood, were steps he had mounted slowly to reach this vital day.

So entire of faith was his soul, so ready to take vows that bound him to this woman he had chosen, that the simple ceremony seemed to comprehend in ineffable symbolism all the terrible mystery and the touching promise of eternal union. He did not notice when once the minister's spectacles slid to the tip of his nose and his short-sighted eyes blinked despairingly at the Bible, as he groped to readjust the tortoise shell rims. But Lucia gave a little titter, as if with relief at the interruption in the solemn service. Then her eyes met the shocked stare of Hope and Grace Prawn, and her expression at once changed to one of sweetness. David held his mother's worn wedding ring, and when the time came, turned reverently to slip it on Lucia's finger. She looked at him with clear blue eyes, her mouth wreathing upwards at the corners in a faint smile.

The minister blessed them. David bent and kissed his wife, his heart big and singing within him. He had never imagined that he could be so happy.

Then the servant appeared with the huge bunch of pink roses which he had ordered for Lucia. She laughed and blushed and buried her face in their fragrance.

"I can't take them all, David. What would I look like in the street, carrying them? Let me give some away to the little girls."

The faintest shade of disappointment came into his honest eyes.

But he answered heartily. "Of course, sweetheart."

So, with charming grace, she divided the bunch of roses among the delighted Prawn family, who, completely subjugated, smiled and beamed and wished her well. The two little girls, grown suddenly human and unexpectedly noisy, rushed to the window, and pressed their round little noses flat against the pane and held the roses crumpled in their hands, waving Lucia good-by.

In this manner David and Lucia Ghent went forth from the minister's house arm in arm.

"My wife . . . my own wife," he murmured, and would have shown some demonstrative signs of rapture, but she restrained him, glancing at him sideways, with a tilt of her head.

"We're in the street now, and you've got to obey me," she said gayly.

"Sure I will, little queen," he cried. "Let's do anything you want."

"Well, then, first I'll telephone to Mabel and tell her about you and that she may expect us for lunch. My, she'll be thrilled! Then we'll walk around a bit."

"Anything you want, girlie."

After a long and animated conversation on the telephone with the invisible Mabel, Lucia informed David:

"She's awfully excited and dying to meet you. Mabel's one of my best friends, though I don't see

her often. We can trust her really just for that reason. Anyway, everything just comes out right. Her father and mother have gone off for a trip somewhere, so she's alone."

"Good for Mabel!" exclaimed David. "Now girlie, what will we do?"

"Let's go shopping," suggested Lucia. "I need a veil and some hairpins."

"I guess we can find something more interesting than that for you," he said and looked down at her proudly.

David had never known what it was to shop with a young and pretty woman. He very soon had spent all the money he had brought with him, which was no small amount. This seemed to him very natural. Nothing could be too expensive for Lucia, nothing too good.

He bought her a pretty pearl brooch, he bought her a locket; he bought her a Rhine stone belt buckle and a long fleecy pink veil. She took everything he offered her just like a pleased child, he thought. Her eyes shone, her lips had grown pinker. She glowed, walking beside him, wearing the few roses she had kept from the bunch. He had asked her not to put on her gloves, so that he might see the ring on the finger of her left hand.

"You'll get me a shiny new one some day, won't you; Davy?" she coaxed, as she saw him look down at it lovingly.

"Why, if you want, kid. But that's my mother's wedding ring and I thought you'd like it," he said,

and for an instant the bright expression in his eyes was clouded.

"It's very pretty," she murmured hastily and changed the subject.

At one o'clock they went to Mabel Smith's house which proved to be a pretentious residence on Woodward Avenue with a protruding sandstone front, that gave it an overfed look.

"Phew! that's swell," exclaimed David.

Inside the house was furnished ostentatiously with much gilt and damask, of raw and violent shades.

"Mabel's awfully rich," whispered Lucia, as a haughty man servant ushered them into a large salon indigestively surcharged with Louis XVI sofas and chairs and Renaissance tables, and countless heterogeneous ornaments.

David was impressed. "You shall have a room like this some day, sweetheart."

But Lucia made a wry face. "It isn't good taste you know, Davy."

Before David could ask what was wrong about it, Mabel Smith rustled into the room. She was a tall angular girl, with drab colored hair fluffed over a high forehead, and small, sharp eyes. Among other unnecessary things she wore a long gold chain weighted with charms of all sizes and descriptions.

"Lucia, you dear duckie."

Whereupon the two girls flew into one another's arms with various shrill and ecstatic exclamations.

David, who had risen at Miss Smith's entrance, stood awkwardly waiting for some attention to be shown him. He was rather bewildered. Lucia, in

presence of her girl friend, seemed to change utterly. Her voice rose to a high affected pitch. She became demonstrative and confidential.

"Here she is!" she said at last and dragged him forward as if he were something on show.

"How do you do?" he said, trying to seem unconscious.

"I'm very pleased to meet you, I'm sure," simpered Mabel Smith, with an elaborately prepared cordiality of manner.

"Oh, Mabel, can I go to your room and fix my hair? I'm just dying to powder my nose," said Lucia, not giving her husband and her friend time for further amenities.

"Of course, darling. Oh, it's all too exciting for words!" babbled Mabel.

"Do you mind being left for a moment, David?" Lucia addressed him with marked sweetness.

"Go as far as you like, girls," said David and settled himself patiently to wait in the corner of a big gilt sofa.

He would have preferred to keep Lucia all to himself on this day. He thought that probably Mabel Smith was a very nice girl, but somehow she made him nervous. Also the wealth surrounding him seemed to be reminding him that there were many things as yet that he could not buy Lucia, who deserved them. But he was in too unquestioning a mood of felicity to allow any small clouds entrance into the blue sky of his day.

He waited a long time. When at last Mabel and Lucia tripped back, they were in a state of red-

cheeked flutter, whispering together meaningly. Lucia had taken off her hat.

"Here now, girls, no more secrets," cried David good-naturedly, and catching Lucia in his arms, kissed her. "She's a pretty nice kid, isn't she?" he said, nodding over her head to Mabel who looked self-conscious.

Lucia from the shelter of David's arms peeped around at her friend in a shy proud way. "Now, David, what will Mabel think of us?"

That young lady tossed her head and lifted an arm ladened with jingling bangles: "Oh, my dear, don't mind *me!*"

At this interesting point luncheon was announced.

The dining-room was big and dark, hung in a virulent green, with a heavy mahogany table and chairs. The table was littered with heavy silver dishes and enough cakes, fruits and sweets to supply a regiment of greedy children. "I had a dinner last night," explained the hostess. "These are party remains."

She had ordered champagne. David would have preferred whisky and soda. But Lucia sipped the wine with evident enjoyment, and by the end of the meal, had grown more animated and affectionate than ever. "My dear, what a delicious lunch," she kept on saying to her friend, who bridled and drank her champagne affectedly.

Soon after coffee was served David and his wife took their leave, not before however many protestations had been exchanged between the two girls.

"You swear you'll never tell anybody," said Lucia. "I'd never forgive you."

"I swear and cross my heart. You can trust me," gushed Mabel and darted killing glances at David.

Almost as soon as the front door closed behind them Lucia turned to her husband.

"Well, what do you think of her?"

"Why, if she's your friend she must be all right," answered David cautiously.

"She's very nice, but a little common," declared Lucia. "She doesn't go out much."

"Go out?"

"Yes, not with really smart people. But she's nice."

"I shouldn't think it mattered what people she went with," observed David with simple directness. "Anyway, she was nice to us."

"She was very glad of the chance," retorted Lucia. "She'd give anything to get married."

"My blessed little girl, don't let's think of her any more," said David tenderly.

He hailed a carriage and, for half an hour they drove about Detroit without knowing much where they were going. David held Lucia's hand and was absolutely happy.

Then at four o'clock they took the train back to Lake Grove.

"Mother will be worried unless I'm home for supper," said Lucia.

It was a slow train, for which this time David was thankful. Lucia nestled close to him, her silken hair brushing his cheek. Her nearness, her beauty,

her youth mounted like strong wines to his head. Regardless of the other people in the car, he took her hand, turned his back so that no one but she should see his eyes, and bent over her. Her own eyes grew curiously liquid and swimming blue.

"Davy, why do you look at me like that?"

"Aren't you my wife?"

"David don't, you give me the creeps."

"Lord, how I love you!" he said in a low voice.

She glanced down at his hands which were broad and square of finger.

Then her eyelids drooped and she stirred like a restless bird in a nest.

"Girlie, look up."

He touched the ring. As if remembering something compromising, she drew it hastily off.

"I can't wear it Davy, on account of Mother. I'll hang it on a little chain though. But I don't know how I'll explain about my presents, unless I tell Mother Mabel gave them to me. Mother knows Mabel is rich."

"Oh, don't tell a lie," cried David shocked.

"How silly of you," her voice was lightly patronizing. "I certainly am not going to tell Mother the truth."

"Why not, darling . . . after all?"

She avoided his eyes. "Because it would upset her plans."

"What plans, Lucia?"

"Oh, David, don't tease me. She'll tell you herself."

"Not to marry you, I hope, to anyone else?"

"Dear me, no!"

He breathed a quick sigh of relief. She smiled up at him. "You ask her to-night if you can be engaged to me?"

"That's funny too, isn't it?" said David.

"I know, but it's better to begin that way."

He looked at her adoringly. "I guess I'll never refuse you anything. But I don't pretend to see why we can't tell her?"

She laid a finger across her lips. "Hush, don't argue."

"Never, with you," he declared fondly.

The train chugged into Lake Grove. He helped her down on to the platform, feeling suddenly very grave and depressed, as if a treasure he once had held, was being wrenched from him.

The hotel omnibus was waiting at the station.

"I wish this were our honeymoon," he whispered to her.

She sat decorously in the omnibus, and said: "Hush, be careful," when he tried to take her hand and tell her again how happy he was.

"But no one can see us, darling," he pleaded.

She continued obdurate. "Someone might pass on the road."

As the hotel entrance came in sight, he bent passionately towards her; "Are you really my own sweet wife?"

She smiled at him. "Of course I am."

"Kiss me then."

"Davy, I can't."

"Yes, you can," and daringly, before she could

object, he touched the soft spot behind her ear with his lips. She moved nervously away from him. "Davy, how can you?"

"I don't care," he said stoutly.

Her father and mother were standing on the piazza. They looked surprised when they saw David.

"Wasn't it strange, we met at the station, mother?" said Lucia, jumping down from the omnibus.

David looked at her quickly. Her face was as serene and candid as that of a child.

"I wondered where Mr. Ghent was," remarked Mrs. Earle.

"Oh, he had business in Detroit," said Lucia carelessly; and turning to him put out her gloveless right hand.

"Thank you so much for your company on the train, Mr. Ghent," she murmured, and then, with a sudden vivacious change of voice.

"Mabel was delighted to see me, Mother. She sent you messages, and . . . oh, she's given me the most wonderful things." She drew her mother aside, with a parting sweet glance at David.

"Lucia's a great girl," observed Mr. Earle. "Funny your meeting that way."

"Very funny!" said David dryly.

He wanted now above all things to be alone. There was a queer obscure ache in his heart. He could hardly believe that Lucia was really his wife. Yet this had been his wedding day.

CHAPTER XV

DAVID having his supper in the big barn-like dining-room of the hotel, stared toward Lucia who sat facing him, between her father and mother, at the other end of the room. She was dressed in white and wore a thin gold chain about her neck.

David knew that her wedding-ring must be on this chain. The thought gave him pain as well as pleasure. He would have wished to proclaim her his wife before the whole world, instead of which, she smiled at him across a well-filled range of little tables, separated from him, as it were, by the insistent vulgar claims of surrounding voices, the smell of food and the glare of lights.

As soon as he had finished his supper, he rose and went over to their table.

"May I have coffee with you people?" he asked, slipping into a chair by Lucia.

"We thought we'd take it outside," murmured Mrs. Earle.

"You'd find it more useful inside;" returned Mr. Earle, with a feeble attempt at humor.

Lucia was cracking nuts, with funny little grimaces that twisted her mouth awry. David, watching her, thought he had never seen such small white hands.

"Here, give that to me," he said, and seizing two

of the nuts, cracked them between his thumb and forefinger.

"She mustn't have any more," protested Mrs. Earle. "Lucia, you'll be ill."

"Leave the child alone, my dear," said Mr. Earle.

Lucia pouted and smiled at David.

"I like to eat nuts when I'm nervous."

"Young girls have no right to be nervous," declared her mother, rising from the table with decision. "Come now, Lucia."

They all filed out of the dining-room and sat on the piazza. Mr. Earle, who never drank coffee, closed his eyes and drifted into a silent doze; Lucia rocked back and forth in a chair that creaked monotonously.

When Mrs. Earle had finished her coffee, David tiptoed around to the back of her chair, and bending over it, whispered bravely.

"May I have a word with you?"

She showed some surprise. "Why yes, certainly, Mr. Ghent."

"You and I will just take a stroll then," said David.

Lucia looked up brightly.

"Go ahead, Mamma, I'll sit here with Father."

So David and the mother left the piazza, Mrs. Earle leaning on David's arm. He shortened his step to match hers, and they walked a while in silence down the narrow path, which smelled of magnolia trees.

"I want to tell you that . . . I love your daughter," said David at last very simply.

Mrs. Earle did not answer at once.

"I want her to be my wife," continued David.

"Lucia is very young," observed Mrs. Earle in a slow, careful voice.

"Oh, but I love her so!" cried David impetuously. "I'll make her a good husband, Mrs. Earle . . . and I'll be a good son to you."

He pressed her arm slightly and, without seeking to dissemble his emotion, he continued: "I've always kind of missed having a family. I've needed folks of my own to love and who'd love me. Now, if you'll only let me, I'll make Lucia happy — as happy as anyone could ever make her. I never had a real happy family life. I might as well tell you right now, that my father is still living in England. Or at least I guess he must be still living, though I might never hear to the contrary. I don't read the English papers."

"But, when he dies," murmured Mrs. Earle, "the inheritance . . ."

"I'll never touch a penny of his," answered David obstinately. "I'll make money fast enough. Don't you worry! Why, Mrs. Earle, I *couldn't* take his money — he killed my mother . . ."

"Killed your mother!"

"Well, he didn't murder her outright perhaps, but he was a tyrant, and she was gentle. So she died, because life with him was too hard. When Grandmother died, and . . . well, he tried to beat me and I ran away. Just think of me as an orphan, will

you, Mrs. Earle? I'll love your daughter hard enough to make her happy . . . not like *my* mother."

"It hadn't occurred to me . . ." murmured Mrs. Earle.

"I've always longed for the kind of girl I could work for," said David. "I'm not precisely a rich man yet, Mrs. Earle. . . . But I can provide for a wife and . . . as time goes on, I'll be able to take care of you all. You know that you'll be like my own mother."

Mrs. Earle did not reply at once. Her head was bent slightly forward. She held up her skirt carefully and seemed to be hunting for easy places to step in the dark path.

"To be frank with you, Mr. Ghent," she said at last in a slow deliberate way, "nothing would give me more pleasure, than to have you for Lucia's husband. But my daughter is very young yet and has seen nothing of the world. She cannot know her own mind."

"I'm sure she does," cried David eagerly.

"You cannot be sure, Mr. Ghent. So although I do not forbid an understanding between you, I must ask you to give her time. . . ."

David's heart grew suddenly heavy. It was his impulse to blurt out the truth then and there. It seemed all wrong in the first place that he should be obliged to act a lie to Lucia's mother. He wished now that he had not promised the deception.

His voice was sober as he asked: "How long must we wait?"

"Hasn't Lucia told you of our plans?"

They had come to a standstill under a big tree. Mrs. Earle dropped his arm and turned to face him.

"No, she hasn't."

"Well," said Mrs. Earle slowly, "at her own wish and at great sacrifice on my part, I have been able to manage a trip to Europe for her. She and I are going to leave Lake Grove the day after tomorrow, Mr. Ghent, and go to New York. We sail for Paris next Saturday. I am surprised that Lucia has not told you."

For the moment David could not speak. With the first shock of surprise he felt as if someone had knocked him over brutally . . . knocked breath and power of expression from him.

"We will only be away about six months," continued Mrs. Earle gently, as if she appreciated his state of mind. "The child has been looking forward to this trip for some time, Mr. Ghent. We have friends in Paris. She will see life there, meet new people, have new impressions. Then, when we return, if you and she are still of the same mind, we shall speak again of an engagement. Believe me, it is fairer for her."

David, with a great effort, regained his control.

"You say SHE wants to go?"

"Yes," returned Mrs. Earle, "she does."

"I have nothing to say against it, of course," he said in a low voice, and looked away into the dusk of the night. A cricket chirped in the grass beside him.

"That's a sensible man. Six months pass very quickly."

He was wondering miserably why Lucia had not told him the truth. This was his first encounter with feminine stratagem and he could not understand it. If Lucia had told him the truth, he might have acted differently.

Mrs. Earle seemed waiting for him to speak. "I am sorry if you are disappointed," she said finally.

"Oh, that's all right," he sought bravely to hide the trouble in his voice.

Just then, someone came running down the path. It was Lucia. A lace scarf draped over her head and shoulders, gave her the silhouette of a nun.

"Oh, there you are!" she cried. "I wondered where you had gone to." Mrs. Earle began to pick her way back along the path.

"I'll leave you two young ones to continue this walk," she said indulgently. "Don't stay out too long, Lucia."

She turned and offered David her hand. "I'm glad we've had this little talk, Mr. Ghent."

"So am I, ma'am," said David.

"What did you tell her?" demanded Lucia breathlessly, as soon as her mother was out of hearing.

"Lucia, why didn't I know you were going to Europe?" asked David gravely.

She came close to him and put her hand on his shoulder.

"I didn't dare," she confessed, and played nervously with the scarf around her neck. "At first I didn't think it mattered . . . then I didn't dare."

"Little girl?" . . . his voice sounded deep with pain. "Is this how you trust me? How much simpler it would have been to have told me. . . . I had to lie to your mother to-night. And I've never lied to a woman."

Lucia hung her head, like a naughty child caught in some small sin. Then, with a swift birdlike movement, she buried her face in his shoulder.

"It's you who wanted to go," he insisted.

She did not answer.

"I'd never have prevented it," David went on heavily.

"Forgive me," she whispered. "It really *is* Mamma, you know. She's scrimped and saved for years now to give me this trip. It would seem ungrateful if I didn't want to go."

"Why don't you be a brave girl and tell her the truth?"

"Oh, no!" she cried, in a small panic, lifting her head from his shoulder, "it would disappoint her so cruelly. Six months won't be much, Davy. And while we're away, I'll prepare her, I promise that when we come back, she'll know. Please don't be angry."

David slowly shook his head. "I'm not angry . . . only grieved."

"I've never been to Paris, Davy," she went on in a low eager voice. "I've never had chances . . . like other girls. I've never had fun and traveled and seen the world. Won't you understand and forgive me?"

"Of course I forgive you, sweetheart," he said

sadly. "But, Lucia, do you realize that you're my wife now? . . . my own wife, for always? Do you realize what it means to me to let you go, when I know you're mine?"

"Of course I do," she murmured sweetly. "But it won't be for very long, Davy."

She lifted her face to be kissed. A mask of shadow hid her eyes and her lips and the scarf shrouded her hair. He kissed her passionately, his arms around her. "I guess I love you too much," he said.

She laughed softly; "Oh, no, never too much!"

"Well, if you've got to go, . . . you'll go. But while you're away I'll work and wait for you. You'll know that, won't you, sweetheart?"

"Of course, dear David."

They turned and walked slowly towards the hotel.

He thought she was only a child after all; accordingly he talked to her like a child. She became playful and tender. So arm in arm, like two very young lovers, they passed through the dusk.

The air was poignantly damp and warm. An immense sadness brooded in David's soul, on this his wedding night. When they reached the hotel, the girl, his wife, turned to him.

"Good night, Davy."

"Good night, Lucia."

She tripped away up the steps, turning and waving to him as she reached the door. The light from the hotel hall framed her.

David tramped back over the path to the edge of the somber lake. He could not sleep that night.

CHAPTER XVI

THE few days that were left him in Lake Grove slipped by like joys that pass, trailing pain after them.

It seemed as if Mrs. Earle, for all her kindness to David, guarded her daughter more closely than ever.

Moreover the girl had grown shy, and in the rare moments David managed to spend alone with her, started away from him at any sign of excessive lover-like ardor. Yet so unfathomable were her ways, that when she was in the company of her father and mother, her eyes sent messages which were decidedly provocative, and languorous. It was as if she had bewitched David; for he, poor fellow, brooding over her impending departure, fretting against the deceit of his position and ascribing to her all the natural fears and humors of an innocent young girl, allowed himself to become in her gentle hands, an amiable and passively adoring plaything.

So, at last the time came for leaving Lake Grove, without his being able to lift a finger to postpone it, and indeed without advancing his claim upon her more than the day they had stood before the Reverend Timothy Prawn to be pronounced man and wife.

With Mrs. Earle's consent, he was going with

them to New York. In this manner at least, he would be near Lucia until the very moment of sailing. But the last evening they spent at Lake Grove was a melancholy one. Lucia and her mother went early to their rooms, pleading the necessity of packing. Lucia slid a sweet sidelong glance at David, who looked very glum.

"Don't be late for the train to-morrow," she said, as she gave him her hand.

"No chance of it," he answered sadly.

He and Mr. Earle remained on the piazza. Mr. Earle was being left behind on the morrow, his wife having declared that New York would be harmful to him at this season. He was huddled formlessly in rugs now, while David perched on the railing, smoked a cigar. Neither of them appeared to be in a conversational mood. But Mr. Earle, fussing nervously with his covers, and peering at David, finally spoke with such a sudden break in the silence, that David started.

"Mr. Ghent," he said, "my wife has told me how you feel about Lucia. I want you to know how pleased I am. Lucia couldn't find a better man."

David warmly touched by such unexpected expansiveness, slid from the railing and moved closer to the older man. "Thank you, sir," he said heartily.

"Sit down . . . sit down . . ." mumbled James Earle. "I have something else I want to say to you, Sir."

At once David drew up a big rocking chair and settled himself in a pose of eager attentiveness.

"I'm at your service, Mr. Earle."

Lucia's father turned towards him. In the half shadows, David could see that his face looked worn and worried.

"You want to marry Lucia, don't you?"

"Why, yes, Sir," said David simply.

James Earle was evidently laboring under the stress of some deep emotion. His voice sank to a whisper as if he were afraid he might be overheard.

"I want you to promise that nothing or no one will prevent you from marrying my little girl."

On the lawn below, a faint sound of insects churned the stillness.

Lights twinkled from the hotel windows; a breeze stirred in the bushes at the foot of the piazza.

"That is easily done," said David shortly. "I promise you, Sir."

Mr. Earle drew a short breath as of relief. "You'll understand a father's concern. I'm not going to live much longer."

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" cried David briskly. "You're good for many years yet, Sir."

The sick man shook his head in slow weary wisdom. "I'm afraid not . . . but if I feel that Lucia is well cared for, it will be easier to go. . . . My little girl is young . . . and a bit . . . well, she isn't easy to control, Mr. Ghent. Her mother is a very ambitious woman. I don't want her to interfere between you and Lucia." His voice sank to a whisper.

"You need not worry about that, Sir."

"No one must know that I've spoken to you this

way," continued Mr. Earle. "My wife is a very good woman. I'm not blaming her, you understand, but like all women, she . . she wants her daughter to do better than she did. I wasn't a fine enough match for Mrs. Earle. Now Lucia is such a child . . ."

"Yes, she is a child," agreed David gravely.

"We American men," said Mr. Earle, "are accustomed to think of our women as being always children. I don't know whether that is quite wise."

He turned his weary near-sighted eyes to David. "Children grow up, Mr. Ghent."

"Good women are always children, in the sense that they are always good and sweet," said David.

"Perhaps . . . perhaps! But it is a great weight off my mind, I assure you, now that I know an honest man like you will always take care of Lucia."

David held out his hand. "Shake on it, Sir!"

Just then Mrs. Earle appeared at the end of the piazza. David saw her silhouetted against the ballroom window, and jumped to his feet.

"Here we are, ma'am."

She came forward, frowning slightly. "James, you'll catch your death of cold sitting here."

Mr. Earle rose slowly, the rugs falling from his lank, waste figure.

"I was just coming up, my dear."

David bent to pick up the coverings.

"Give them to me, Mr. Ghent," said Lucia's father. "Good night, I've enjoyed our little talk."

"Good night, Sir. So have I," returned David warmly.

A little later, as he was going upstairs to his room, he met Sam McKew in the hall.

"So you're leaving us to-morrow," remarked that young man sociably.

"Yes, I'm sorry to say," answered David.

"Well, good luck to you! Hope to see you back here soon on your honeymoon. I'll give you that suite on the first floor."

"Thanks," said Dvaid. "I'll be back some day."

Early the next morning, he and Lucia and Mrs. Earle left Lake Grove. Mr. Earle stood on the piazza to bid them good-by. David took his hand in a firm grasp. "Don't you bother, Sir," he whispered. "Everything's going to be fine."

"I hope so," said the sick man gratefully.

Sam McKew was there also to see them off; and a small circle of guests, who, grouped in the background, watched and whispered among themselves.

The same omnibus which had brought David and Lucia back from the station the day of their marriage, now took them away from the Hotel. David staring out of the omnibus window, remembered the day of his arrival, when, as a stranger, the roads and the woods and the lake had contained no message for him. Now everything in Lake Grove spoke of Lucia to him. It was raining that morning, in a slanting drizzle from a gray cottony sky. A fine veil of mist lay over fields and trees. Damp exud-

ing from earth brought a fragrant aroma of grass and soaked leaves.

The jolt of the omnibus was like Fate advancing, willy nilly over a rocky road. The valises and trunks tucked on top of the omnibus, glistened in the wet, the window-panes were streaked with raindrops.

David looked wistfully at Lucia, who was enchantingly lovely in a brown pongee tailor suit, with a long brown veil covering her small traveling hat. She seemed excited and happy.

"I hope we haven't forgotten anything, Mother. *Did* you put in my silver brush? And the pink veil . . ." she was saying.

"If we left anything behind, your father will send it along," answered Mrs. Earle tranquilly.

"You aren't very talkative this morning," teased Lucia, turning to David. He roused himself and tried to smile. "Oh, I'm kind of sorry to leave."

"It's very kind of you to come away with us," remarked Mrs. Earle.

At the station Lucia snuggled coaxingly up to him.

"Don't be so blue, Davy darling."

"How can I help it?"

"I'll be back before you know it." She looked at him, her blue eyes suddenly pleading and tender.

He shook his head sadly and turned away to attend to the luggage.

It seemed only natural that Mrs. Earle should allow him to take care of all the details of the trip. He was not observant of such things. But in the end it was he who paid for everything. Mrs. Earle

seemed to have grown suddenly vague and dependent. So it was he who bought papers and fruit and candy; who tipped the porters, paid for the meals, and all but paid for the tickets.

When they arrived in New York, he arranged about the trunks, put the two women in a carriage and drove them to the Waldorf. Mrs. Earle had raised no objection against his staying with them at the hotel. So he took rooms on the same floor for them and himself, and manœuvred a private talk with the manager, in which he said:

"You give these ladies two of the best rooms. But name a cheap figure for them . . . see? I'll settle the difference with you."

Therefore it happened that Mrs. Earle and Lucia were put in two big sunny rooms, facing Fifth Avenue. David's room was across the hall.

That first afternoon he drove Lucia and her mother around to the shops. They had a long list of things they wanted to buy. He waited patiently in the taxi, while they disappeared through the swinging doors of one big department store after another. Although it was August, and New York was bathed in heat, with gray streets from which heat seemed to ooze and stifling smell of asphalt, and a sun that drove blue rays down between giant buildings in a general sweltering atmosphere that battened those who strove against it, there seemed to be women enough to fill the shops.

David, for want of something better to do, stared out of the window of his taxi and watched with some curiosity the stream of women drifting in and out

of the gaping mouthed shop doors. There was a constant flutter of them, all with the same intent expression on their faces, the same purposeful walk, as in their passage they elbowed and jostled one another aside.

The big store windows glittered invitingly; women paused before them and frowned, in swift feminine appraisal. Most of these women were in shirt waists. Beads of heat glistened on their faces, their noses needed powder, their hats sat slightly awry.

He wondered about them, with some respect and a little indulgence. But by the end of the afternoon he grew very tired of waiting in the taxi, and ventured to suggest to Lucia that he go into the next shop with them.

"I want to see what it's like," he told her.

"You'll hate it," she said. "They're horrible places."

"You don't seem to think so," he retorted with no point of malice.

She wore, indeed, the expression of a cheerful martyr, but her mother looked decidedly old and worn, as if the heat of the day and the shops had melted away her usual placid well preserved appearance. Nevertheless, the taxi motor was full of odd shaped bundles, and both women showed satisfaction over their purchases.

David insisted, and so, feeling adventurous, followed Lucia into Stern's, which at the time was crammed with determined women. He soon felt as much out of place among them as the traditional bull in the china shop.

But he was glad he had come. The bustle and stir, the sharp elbowed passage of hawk-like females, the patter and slide of feet, the restlessness of the feminine throng in a kingdom which was so utterly and evidently theirs, filled him with a kind of admiration. Here, swooping and foraging and picking at brilliantly displayed wares, women showed that secret thing which they often deftly hide — their will.

Lucia and her mother wriggled their way so quickly in and out of the narrow aisles, that David had hard work to follow them. He marveled meanwhile at the cool ease with which they asserted right of way.

"Say, is it like this every day?" he whispered to Lucia.

"Why, of course," she answered absently. "Mother, *look* at those kimonos."

Before he could turn round, she had darted towards a bargain counter, already thickly surrounded by a heaving mass of women.

He stood back and watched her.

Her face had suddenly grown keen and hard. She elbowed a woman out of her path, pushed a child aside, and literally fought her way to the edge of the counter. Then she began to pick and rummage among the kimonos which lay in a limp, chaotic heap.

Fingers, gloved or gloveless, clutched at them, raked them over and messed them, so that they looked like brilliant colored rags.

David saw Lucia snatch at the sleeve of a pink

kimono which was already in the grasp of a smug elderly woman.

"Mother, look at this . . . only $4.95. I must have it."

"Gee, she's a child," thought David.

The elderly woman, however, had kept firm grip of the pink kimono.

"Pardon me, Madam, this is mine," she said, politely enough.

But Lucia kept her hold. Her lips were set and thin; her eyes had in them a nasty glitter. She and the stranger faced one another.

"I'm sorry. . . . It's mine," insisted Lucia.

The older woman, who seemed of a pacific nature, mumbled, "Well, you have got nerve!" Then, in the face of such great belligerence, sniffed audibly, dropped the kimono as if it had been poisonous, and turned away.

Presently Lucia, flushed and triumphant, emerged with her package.

"Horrid old cat!" was her first comment to David.

"She'd gotten there before you. The thing was hers," said David soberly.

She stared at him with quick impatience. "What does it matter? I've got to buy some gloves and veils now. Do come along, Davy."

He followed her, feeling forlornly that he was being pushed aside and forgotten in this fever of shopping. He had hoped for a sweeter intimacy in these last days before her sailing. But here in a babble of noise, of clattering traffic, of huge cold

buildings like cañons that shut out light and air; here, in this city where men and women raced by one another unseeingly, in a vertiginous mad cascade of life, he seemed to lose sight and hold of the girl even more than at Lake Grove.

That evening he took her and her mother to the theater. He sent first to their rooms, for each of them a big bunch of violets. Lucia loved violets.

At the play, they sat in a box. It seemed to David as if everyone in the audience stared at Lucia. He sat behind her in the shadow of the box, and when all the lights were lowered, he bent daringly and kissed the velvety nape of her neck. She stirred and leaned back nearer to him, whereupon growing bolder, he slipped his arm around her chair and found and held her hand. It folded in his like a soft piece of velvet. He was happy then through the rest of the act, because she had allowed him this sweet privilege.

She seemed so fair, so unattainable. He was proud, observing how much attention centered around her, for other men might stare, since there was no chance of anyone ever touching so much as the hem of her garment, now that she was safely his wife.

She enjoyed the play, which was a musical comedy, and sat demurely smiling at the songs, the elaborate nonsense of it, the brilliant colors on the stage. Mrs. Earle, matronly and distinguished looking, in black silk, nodded in time to the facile, rhythmic melodies.

It was, in fact, throughout, a very pleasant and

successful evening. But when it came to an end, and he was left alone, he tossed through long black hours of the night, haunted by the thought of empty, lonely days to come.

The next morning, as he waited for her in the big hotel hall, he gazed idly at the women who drifted past. There was not one so beautiful as Lucia. At the thought that this was to be their last day together, and that the following morning she would sail away, a choke came to his throat. It never occurred to him to forbid her going. She wanted to go. It was after all, as well that she should have pleasure, while he worked, amassing enough fortune to build a home somewhere for her. His bank account was low just then. He had spent a great deal of money for this trip.

At last she came, tripping down the hall. Her wheat-colored hair shone, framing the early morning pink of her cheeks. She smiled when she saw him hurrying towards her.

"Mother's going to stay in bed this morning," she said, "so we can have until luncheon to ourselves."

They wandered into the Turkish room just off the Hall and sat in one of the bow windows, turning their backs to the room.

There were few people about that morning. White aproned maids walked by noiselessly; bell boys swaggered along, shrilling numbers and names; through the window drifted a smell of asphalt.

Lucia played with the little gold chain round her neck. Once she slipped out the ring and kissed it in

a sweet sly way, casting a swift glance around her, to see if anyone was looking.

"Lucia, how can I let you go?" said David and touched her hand. This morning she was gentle and helpless, and seemed to realize for the first time, that she was leaving him.

"I don't know what I'll do without you, Davy."

"Will you think of me day and night as I'll think of you, sweetheart?"

"Yes, I will." Her eyes were blurred with tears, and at once he wanted to comfort her.

"You'll soon be back, girlie . . . before we know it."

"Oh, I wish I weren't going . . . Call me your wife, Davy."

"My wife . . . my own little wife!"

His heart beat more quickly; his arms ached to seize her and hold her close.

"Davy, I'll be good."

"Of course you will." He looked at her with honest gray eyes. "You couldn't ever be anything else."

She laughed nervously. "Couldn't I? I suppose not."

All too soon Mrs. Earle came down and joined them and it was luncheon time. The afternoon slid by like a dream. Then it came to be dinner. They sat in the palm room. The music played a waltz, and decorative people sat at neighboring little tables and smiled and chattered and drank amber colored wine. Rose colored lights softened their eyes and their smiles.

David was pale and quiet, Lucia sat opposite him and from time to time looked over to him with childish appealing eyes. Mrs. Earle talked on, making conversation, that tided over the meal and forced them to control and conventional effort.

"We know a lot of people in Paris," she told David. "Lucia will have a very good time."

David could not visualize Paris and the people Lucia would know there. He remained wistfully on the brink of familiar things in which he figured beside her.

After dinner they sat in the hall and listened to the music. But very early in the evening Mrs. Earle rose firmly.

"Come, Lucia, we must be up at seven o'clock in the morning. I'm sure David understands." It was the first time she had ever called him David.

He went up with them to the door of their rooms, Mrs. Earle, prompted perhaps, by some sense of pity, said good night and left him standing in the hall with Lucia.

There was no one in sight. Lucia looked up at him with shining blue eyes.

Suddenly, an obscure longing, which always until then he had sought to stifle, swept down upon him in a living sentient tide. He seized the girl's hand, and bent and whispered in her ear. There was such passionate entreaty in his voice and such subtle fluid in his touch, that it drew her forward almost into his arms.

"You're my wife, you know. . . . This is our last time together for months, Lucia girl!"

"I'm afraid! Mother . . ."

"She can't know. Lock the door going into her room. Lucia, sweetheart, won't you trust me? Won't you . . . come to me?"

Her hand was on the knob of the door. She turned it gently, never taking her eyes from David.

"I'll be waiting for you," he whispered.

Late in the night, silently as a ghost, she came to him across the deserted hall. A door creaked once, then shut with the soft thud of Fate.

She was pitifully frightened, icy cold, and she shivered as if she could never stop shivering: — a poor little leaf in a big driving wind.

David received her with a tenderness so great, that it clothed and hushed all fear of the unknown.

At dawn she lay in his arms like a child sleeping.

The pallor of the first light stole through the drawn blinds, crept as a white sea to the gold of her hair.

David watched over her, and only when it had to be, he wakened her.

She wept so bitterly at leaving him, that forgetting his own grief he found words of comfort for her.

But, at the idea of crossing the hall again, her teeth chattered, she shivered as before, and her eyes were dark with fear. She looked up at him once, like a haunted thing and fled quickly, even while he sought to reassure her.

A door creaked and closed with a soft finality.

That morning, at ten o'clock, she sailed.

He stood on the dock and watched her go. She leaned against the deck railing, wearing the violets he had given her; she cried like a baby and waved a tiny white handkerchief. Mrs. Earle stood beside her, smiling good-by.

The hulking ship slowly backed out of the dock, like an uncouth sea monster swimming away. A band played with a jingle of brass. David stared hungrily, passionately at the tall slight figure, as it wavered towards him, shaking the tiny handkerchief.

Such a choke was in his throat that he could not have spoken.

Wedged in a crowd of strangers, whose faces were stretched and contracted in grimaces of farewell, he felt them only as shadows.

Lucia's face grew blurred; the sound of the band grew fainter. He saw the handkerchief still waving . . . a vanishing white dot.

Solemnly the ship manœuvred among the lesser craft, plowed her way and seemed to dwindle in size.

There was left only the dirty sough and sway of water against the dock, and the slow dispersing of strangers.

Then David resolutely turned away.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN the first wrench of parting was over, David breathed deep, as if he were filling his lungs with all the ozone in the world. He could not help feeling that he must be a fine fellow indeed, to win the love of a girl like Lucia. Even though she had sailed away from him, it was his present and future right to provide for her. A most innocent factor in a man's love for a woman, his vanity, found explanation in the fact that she sailed away at all. She left him, only because she trusted him to work for her and to found a home for her returning.

He would therefore set to the task with a will. For there is nothing which arms the soul of a man with more shining weapons than belief in the dependence of a woman and also belief in the woman.

The presence of Lucia in his life summed up the reward of a self-making man; reassured him as to the value of his effort, gave him vigor and delight and ranked him among his fellows. To show other men the wisdom of his choice, to show Lucia the wisdom of her choice, to deck her in trinkets, adore her, refuse her no wish, and to joy in her with unashamed entirety of heart and body: this was what David set out to do.

The very day after her sailing, he examined the

state of his affairs, much as a general reviews his army before a battle. He found that his bank account was low; that he numbered many friends among men; and that he knew more about mines than about anything else.

The condition of his bank account did not worry him. His friends and his knowledge of mines were assets. He felt that mining would prove a richer source of chance than any patient trudge through less adventurous means to success.

Accordingly he did not waste time, but left New York and went to Cobalt, a silver camp in Canada. There, as if chance were in a very good humor indeed, it placed in his way a valuable property which had escaped the attention of other prospectors. David bought it with what was left of his capital and sold it within a few days at a considerable profit. He sent at once five hundred dollars to Lucia's bank in Paris. It had been agreed between them, that he could send sums to this bank, without Mrs. Earle being the wiser.

This first sharing of his luck with Lucia caused him great pride and happiness. He tried to think of all the pretty things she could buy with the five hundred dollars. She could buy a lot, he thought. His imagination wandered clumsily among the baubles and ornaments of a woman's fancy. He chuckled self-consciously, as he enumerated new hats, a dress, feathers, gloves, silk stockings and other dainty frivolities. Now that he had her to consider, he would spend less upon himself and reduce his living to a matter of barest necessities.

He wrote to her every evening. In a small, crude room, by the ragged flame of a smoky lamp, both elbows on the table, he frowned over the difficulties of expressing in a letter all his love and longing.

Outside, the boys of the camp, might be whooping their throats sore, or grouped in the Saloon, be playing their nightly game of poker, drinking to the extent of their thirst; their rough, simple life, their rough, simple presence did not penetrate into the room while David wrote to his wife. Such things were alien to her. But when stillness descended over the camp, and the night grew strong, and the stars glittered like nuggets in the sky, an evoked vision of Lucia surged before David's eyes.

Often and vainly he would stretch out his arm as if to touch her! But his letters could not tell her these things. They were brief and boyish, with all the meaning, all the strength in them hidden behind the barest of words.

"Dearest girlie," ran one of them. "Hope everything is all right with you. I am well and things are going pretty well. I will send you some more money next month. I think of you always and love you, my little wife. Have a good time. Your devoted husband. DAVID."

He heard from her while he was still in Cobalt. It was her first letter, written from the steamer, and it seemed to have come a long, long way. It brought an atmosphere of things and people very incongruous to his surroundings. But these things and

people inasmuch as they concerned Lucia, as they were part of her fragrant life, were received by him with wistful eagerness.

She told him that there were many fashionable passengers on the ship. She had made the acquaintance of some of them and expected to see them in Paris. There was a Mrs. Samuel Tailor, who was a leader in the American colony. "She's going to introduce me to everyone," wrote Lucia. "She dresses divinely. There will be a ball to-morrow night. I suppose I will go. Mamma hasn't been ill a day. Of course I haven't either." She ended the letter affectionately, hoping that he was well and not working too hard.

He read it many times, until he had learned it by heart. It seemed to him like her own voice. But there was anguish as well as pleasure in hearing the voice and not holding her in his arms. That last night before she sailed away had left with him a fierce human longing for more of her sweetness; for a sacred and constant nearness to her.

There were times when he thought of her hair, her eyes, her mouth, her tall lithe body, and thinking of her so, would have gathered her to his heart and crushed her masterfully in his arms. Other times she seemed a beautiful dream, and he a very lonely man trying to pretend the dream was real.

He did not stay in Cobalt long. By the end of October he was back again in New York, staying at the Waldorf Hotel. It seemed to him there as if he were nearer to Lucia. The place was alive with memories. He imagined he saw her everywhere.

The tilt of a hat, the color of a dress, a fleeting smile, or the walk of some tall, slight woman,— all reminded him of Lucia.

He had been in New York two days when he met a man called Richard Sturbin. This man was very handsome. He was not so tall as David, but he was built more gracefully. There was about him a cautious suggestion of feline elegance. His eyes were sleepy looking, his eyelids drooped. He was well-dressed and well-mannered.

Now David who was ready to like most men, accepted a few drinks from Richard Sturbin, treated him to a few, and pronounced him a good fellow, an opinion which seemed indeed flatteringly reciprocated.

One day, in a confidential mood, Richard Sturbin said:

"You're just the man I need, Mr. Ghent."

To which David answered heartily:

"What can I do for you?"

Then the two men started to talk business.

It seemed that Sturbin knew of an electric and gas plant for sale at a bargain, the owner retiring for reasons of health. Sturbin proposed that he and David buy the plant. They could run it without much trouble, and there was every chance of its proving a brilliant investment.

David discovered within himself the instincts of a gambler. After all, he had nothing else in view. So far he had never failed in what he had undertaken. If the affair should succeed, he would make

much money for Lucia. He thought it over carefully and made satisfactory inquiries.

Richard Sturbin was brilliant and persuasive. It ended in the purchase of the plant. Whereupon the late owner wisely disappeared on his quest for health. Then David discovered that he and Richard Sturbin had been cheated. The electric and gas plant, despite its fair but hollow reputation, proved on closer investigation, to be worth nothing. The materials were all rotted and there was no business coming in.

David swore grimly at himself for having been unfaithful to his mines. Nevertheless since he was in a predicament, he made up his mind to find a way out of it.

But Richard Sturbin crumpled up pitifully and blabbered of bullets in his brain. He came to David's room one morning and threw himself dejectedly on the bed.

"Every cent I own is in this d—— thing!" he wailed, "and I guess you're hard hit too. I never knew about the business anyhow. I thought it was solid enough to run itself."

"That's a bad way to do business," said David quietly, and with unshaking hand poured out a bountiful supply of Scotch and soda, from an array of bottles on his table. Having gulped down the drink, he poured out another, offering his dejected partner a companion glass.

"Perhaps the thing isn't as bad as you make out," he added, although his own heart was heavy.

"It couldn't be worse," mumbled Richard Sturbin, accepting the alcoholic consolation.

When they had finished a bottle and smoked a box of cigars, Richard Sturbin's spirits soared to excessive optimism.

"We'll win out yet, old boy, you'll see," he kept saying, wagging his head knowingly. So knowingly indeed, that without further argument, David took him by the arm and led him to his own room on the next floor and put him to bed.

Once alone, he did more active thinking in an hour than, with Richard Sturbin, he had done in three.

He knew very well that he could not afford to lose the money he had placed in the electric plant. He could not afford to lose it, on account of Lucia.

A letter had come from her that very morning, a gloriously happy letter, redolent of amusement and enthusiasm, in which, among other things she had thanked him sweetly for the money he had sent her, adding that there were many bewildering ways of being extravagant in Paris. She was in a whirl of pleasures. Adjectives describing these pleasures flew like so many bright winged butterflies across the hastily scrawled pages. She also mentioned names of cordial hostesses, whose husbands, as David knew, were willingly slaving to amass millions in New York, so that their wives might do them credit in Paris.

Now David squared his shoulders and set about making the best of an ungrateful bargain. For days and nights he wrestled with the difficulties of

floating the electric plant; he studied it until he knew it by heart, then scoured the city and actually found a man who consented to lend money on it. Finally, by superhuman pushing and pulling against big odds, he managed to convert the plant into all it should have been, when he and Richard Sturbin bought it.

Meanwhile Sturbin took heart at David's energetic resourcefulness, and worked as bravely as if he had never been discouraged.

So the day came, when the electric and gas plant flourished, when David had paid back the money he had borrowed, and when, haggard and worn from strain and responsibility, he said to Richard Sturbin:

"Well, Dick, the thing's worth twice as much as we paid for it. Now, let's sell and get out."

Richard Sturbin consented at once. He had grown to believe David infallible. So all came about as David wished, and they were soon able to sell the plant at fine profit.

The evening the papers were signed and the affair definitely disposed of, the two men dined together in the Palm Room of the Waldorf.

"You look all down and out," said Sturbin to David.

"Oh, I'm all right," answered David and began in an unnaturally garrulous way to talk of Lucia. A tired feeling which had of late lain like a weight in his head passed away. He drank many glasses of wine, to Lucia's health, and swore over and over again to his friend that she was the most beautiful girl in the wide world and he the luckiest man.

Sturbin listened, with a worried frown between his eyes. But David did not notice and continued expansively:

"To-morrow, I'll send the girl five hundred dollars. I may take it to her myself! — confound it all, Dick, I'm tired out of this d—n town."

Towards the end of the evening, his head ached ragingly. He persisted in talking about Lucia, but although he saw her quite clearly among the lights and music and people, he could not seem to find adequate words to describe her. In spite of his protestations, immediately after dinner Richard Sturbin took him to his rooms and saw him to bed, leaving him with the cheerful assurance: "You'll be all right to-morrow, my boy."

But David was not all right the next day. Early the following morning, Richard Sturbin came and knocked at the door. Receiving no answer, he knocked louder. At last he was forced to call for help, since the door was locked. When finally the door was forced, he rushed into the room and found David lying unconscious on the floor.

The doctor, hastily summoned, looked very grave and pronounced it a case of overwork and worry; furthermore suggested that his family if he had any, be sent for.

Then Richard Sturbin hunted deliberately through David's papers, found a note from the Paris bank, deduced thereby more than he had been told and took it upon himself to send a cablegram to Lucia Ghent.

Eight days later, Lucia and her mother arrived in New York.

David lay in bed weak as a child. When first he saw Lucia bending over him, he thought she was no more than a vision, such as had haunted his brain during many weary days of lonely struggle.

But she put her arms about him; he smelt the fragrance of her wheat-colored hair, and heard her whispering "Poor Davy!" Then he knew that she was real, and his wonder and gratitude were so great that he could have knelt at her feet and kissed the hem of her gown.

Mrs. Earle stood near by, looking down at him. He tried to take her hand, and murmured: "You forgive us, Mamma?"

She said quietly:

"Yes, David, Lucia has told me." That was all.

David yielded then to a delicious convalescence, in which the beautiful, youthful figure of his wife shone like a healing sun.

"Are you sure you don't mind my having upset your trip and brought you back, girlie?" he asked her over and over again.

She only smiled sweetly and gave him her hand to stroke.

"Nonsense, Davy dear, as soon as we knew that you were sick, we *flew*." David gazed at her with wistful eyes.

"It was wonderful of you."

His moments alone with her were rare. Mrs. Earle most often managed to be with her daughter, as if she needed to be chaperoned. The older

woman was kind to David, although never demonstrative. He grew accustomed to see her sitting near his window during the short November afternoons, embroidering a teacloth, her matronly profile serene, her needle unhurried. She seemed to condescend to work, while Lucia flitted about the room, talking lightly of the new friends she had made in Paris, or of what she saw on her daily walks.

It seemed to David then as if he were surrounded with everything a man could desire.

"You don't know how fine it is to have a real family," he said one day, with a luxurious sigh, as, propped up in pillows, he looked from Mrs. Earle to Lucia, who laughed gayly.

"Most people want to get rid of their family."

"I don't!" cried David. "I wish Papa were here too."

"Poor James!" sighed Mrs. Earle conventionally.

Her husband was in Florida, nursing his shattered health. David had received a pathetic letter from him, sending him blessings and good wishes. "Lucia is a lucky woman," had ended the letter. David had been as pleased as a child about it.

Every day Richard Sturbin came to inquire concerning David's health, and as soon as he was strong enough, David insisted that he should be allowed entrance into the room.

"He's my friend, Lucia," he said, when she pleaded the question of fatigue.

She smiled sweetly. "Well, if he doesn't tire you. He seems nice, and he's very handsome."

"You bet he is! Handsomer than your ugly old husband!" said David looking at her with the clumsy wistfulness of a man angling for a kind word.

She put a cool little hand over his mouth.

"Don't be silly, boy."

The first time Richard came to see him, David joked.

"Say, my wife finds you a regular good-looking man." Richard Sturbin blushed a sudden red, which made David laugh. Later on he himself proposed to Sturbin: "Why don't you take Lucia out a bit? She's cooped up all day long with me, and it's not fair."

"I will, if she'll come," said Sturbin eagerly.

That night David stayed alone, while his friend took Lucia and her mother to the theater.

Meanwhile he grew stronger, and began to make plans.

"I guess mines are good enough for me," he confided to Richard Sturbin one afternoon. "Only there is Lucia, you know. I couldn't expect her to live in a camp."

Lucia, who was sitting on the edge of the bed, sewing buttons on a white glove, dropped her work and turned her blue eyes towards her husband.

"Why not? I think it would be exciting."

Mrs. Earle from the window, where she sat embroidering on the teacloth, lifted her head for just a moment.

"It would be quite impossible, Lucia," she said coldly.

"Of course, of course, I know," agreed David.

Lucia pouted at her mother.

"Look here, David, I've an idea," said Richard Sturbin suddenly, looking at Lucia. "Why don't you go to San Francisco? You would be right in mining country there, and Mrs. Ghent would not suffer any discomfort. On the contrary . . ."

David raised himself in the bed and leaned forward eagerly.

"That's it, my boy! That's it! How'd you like California, Lucia?"

"I'd like it, Davy dear."

"Now I have another proposition," continued Richard Sturbin slowly: "I have a very nice big house there, you know, David, that I've always rented until this winter. Why won't you and Mrs. Ghent give me the great pleasure of living in it, until you find something better?"

"We couldn't do that," said David quickly.

"Why not?" cried Lucia. "I'm sure Mr. Sturbin means it, Davy, and it sounds just lovely."

"Indeed I mean it," answered Richard Sturbin. "It is just lying around now doing nothing. I intended going back to San Francisco for a while myself. There are three floors. If you wouldn't mind . . ." he hesitated. "I might live in the top one, when I'm there, which is seldom, and you could have the second floor all to yourselves. And the parlor and dining-room and so on, we could share."

Mrs. Earle rose from her chair and came forward slowly, holding her embroidery. She had a dignified air of authority.

"I think, David, that is an excellent idea," she said.

David, who was still very weak, sank back among the pillows.

"It's awfully good of you, Dick."

Richard Sturbin turned an eager, handsome face towards the two women. "David pulled me through a bad time here," he said. "I'm only too glad to be of any use. The house is too big for me alone. And I'm so seldom there."

"I'm sure it is very kind of you, Mr. Sturbin," said Mrs. Earle graciously.

"Yes, indeed." Lucia stood tall and radiant, smiling at him.

"It's awfully good of you, Dick," repeated David many times during the next few days. "I've no excuse for not getting well quick with such a family and such a friend."

It seemed indeed to him as if he were surrounded by love and noble sentiments. Even to Mrs. Earle, who was not more than dutifully kind to him, he ascribed a maternal affection which perhaps she really felt.

He was alone now much of the time. Lucia often went out with Richard Sturbin. But when she came back into the convalescent's room, she brought such a radiant, youthful sense of exhilaration, that David declared it made him feel better just to look at her.

Then, as if she were a child, he coaxed her to chatter of all the sights and pleasures she had enjoyed during her walks and trips to the theaters.

She filled the room with perfume of winter vio-

lets, with the glint of street lights, window shows, of costly luxuries, music and passing colorful throngs of strangers. Her eyes shone like two great blue lakes with the sun upon their surface.

David, listening one evening to her pretty babble, suddenly whispered: "Come here, girlie."

She nestled on her knees beside the bed, so that he could put a hand on her golden hair.

"We're pretty fond of one another, aren't we, girlie?"

"Yes, Davy, dear."

"I hope when you get married, my boy, you'll be as happy," he said to Richard Sturbin, who was standing at the foot of the bed.

"I hope so," replied his friend soberly.

CHAPTE

ONE early Spring day
wife arrived in San F
Richard Sturbin had pre
weeks, and the doors of his
open in welcome, with hims
an eager host.

" You must consider this yo
gallantly taking Lucia's hand,
David following.

The house was on Jackson S
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view of the Bay and the Presi
and comfortable, obviously fu
taste. The hall and dining
brown, the color of a dried a
living room was hung in dee
heavy, dark oak furniture.

The second floor, which w

room and two bedrooms. Lucia's room was white and old rose; there were flowers in all the vases and the newest magazines and novels on a little low table near a lounging chair.

"Now, really, old boy, really, Dick, this is fine! Lucia, isn't it fine?" cried David over and over again from the fullness of his heart.

To him everything was wonderful. The future shone in clear light of day, with a radiant central figure of Lucia; his friends, his business and hopes grouped about her.

In this manner the new life began auspiciously. David found that there were many men in San Francisco who were glad to know him and who were glad to have their wives know Lucia; he was considered indeed as a rising power to be propitiated.

He took an office on Market Street and from there started directing many schemes of wide scope and issue. These first days he was absolutely happy. His heart was light, his eyes young and keen, always the eyes of a hunting dog on the trail. Lucia danced beside him, enchanted with everything he and other people could give her, entering a life of ease and pleasure as a child runs into a garden.

David often thought of his first visit to the Golden City, an eager, wistful boy he was then, on the threshold of experience. It so gratified and amused him to evoke images of his first timid dreams of fortune, that one evening, when he and Lucia were alone in their sitting-room, with shaded lights and flowers and the warmth of intimacy floating a

subtle atmosphere around them, he was tempted to tell her the story of his boyhood.

She listened quietly, curled on the divan, with her face in the shadow of the cushions. She was dressed that evening in a pink house gown, very loose and flowing, with tiny old blue silk roses around the neck, and fleecy lace at the sleeves. But for once David forgot to look at her. He saw himself again a staunch little boy, trudging from Wheaton to Tilbury; he felt the swash of waves against the sides of the *Jackson;* smelt the sour smell of dishes; he saw Sullivan and Betty and Peter Crewe and the stables where he had passed so many happy hours; he saw San Francisco and Jake Williams and the mining camp — all those memories of which he was proud, he summoned before Lucia, in simple homely phrase, concluding:

"And then I met you, sweetheart."

Lucia turned and looked at him. Her face had sharpened almost imperceptibly; her thin lips were set in a straight line.

"Don't ever tell anyone else . . . all these things," she said.

"Why, Lucia?" There was swift surprise and hurt in his eyes. He came near to her and tried to put his arm about her. But she repelled him gently, with a little shiver.

"You washed dishes and tended horses! I don't see how you could."

"A man can do anything," said David.

"Not a gentleman," murmured Lucia.

"What did you say, dearie?"

"Nothing."

"Little girl, you don't mind, do you, all I've had to do . . . to get on?"

She sighed and answered slowly: "No, I don't mind exactly, David, but . . . well, don't reminisce to anyone else, will you?"

Then feeling her near him, with the silk of her gown against his shoulder, inhaling the perfume which drifted from her as from a flower, his boyhood dropped from him like a shrunken garment, and he clasped her to him passionately.

"Not if you don't want me to, girlie."

He never spoke again of such things. This, moreover, was one of the last evenings they spent alone together. The gay life of San Francisco soon crept like a playful sea invading their intimacy. In a short time, Lucia became popular. She was called "the beautiful Mrs. Ghent"; young men, trig of clothes, fluent of manner, came and left cards; pretty, flighty young women rushed in and out of the house at all hours; the telephone rang through meal times with a continuous and irritating tinkle; invitations arrived to bridge parties, to teas, to dinner, to balls. These invitations of course included David and most often also Richard Sturbin, who, although his presence in his own home was tactful and unobtrusive, had come, at David's desire, to be considered part of the family.

"Dick's my pal and yours, dear," he said over and over again, to Lucia.

"He's certainly very nice to us," she answered cautiously.

David would have wished a simpler life, for, as a matter of fact, only when he was in his office and with business men, who talked the same language as himself, did he feel fully at his ease. He was bewildered by the rapidity with which Lucia made friends, especially as he did not care for most of these friends and their costly ways, their vapid talk, and their pleasures. Often he came back late from his office to find a chirping, brilliant group of bridge players, who never even lifted their heads as he entered the big room. He seemed a stranger to them and among them. It surprised him that Richard Sturbin fitted so easily into this social life, talked so easily the jargon of the tea-hour.

"Don't see how you do it, Dick," he said one afternoon, having fled with his friend to the smoking-room.

Richard Sturbin laughed. He was puffing a good cigar offered him by David. He wore a red carnation in his button-hole, and there was an unconscious ease and grace in his manner as he leaned back in the leather armchair.

"It's a habit," he said carelessly.

"It's an expensive one," returned David, knitting his forehead into worried lines. "Lucia's spending a good bit of money these days."

"Let her have her fling," said Richard Sturbin.

David sat at the desk, and drew figures on a stray sheet of paper.

"Yes . . . of course. But I never really see my own wife any more."

"That's society. Isn't business going all right?" inquired his friend.

"Well enough. But hang it all, I tell you, I never see Lucia alone any more."

Richard Sturbin laughed again. "Well, David, that's what it is, the poor man never sees his wife, because he's so busy making money for her, and the rich man never sees his wife, because he's made the money, and she's busy spending it."

Just then Lucia opened the door and ran into the room. "Mr. Sturbin, I've been hunting for you. Do come. We want you for bridge. You can be my partner if you want to."

Richard rose at once from his chair, flinging away his cigar. "Coming."

David went quickly toward Lucia. "You haven't kissed me, dearie, this afternoon."

"Oh, I didn't see you, David." She gave him an absent-minded peck on the cheek.

"What do you call that?" He leaned forward and kissed her vigorously on the lips. She gave a little cry.

"Davy, you'll take off all the powder. Do behave! and why aren't you brushed off, and why haven't you put on a clean collar?"

"I've just come home, girlie," he said, looking guiltily into the mirror.

"Mr. Griggs has been asking for you," continued Lucia crossly.

"Oh, is Jimmy there? Send him around."

"Oh, well, I will. Do come, Mr. Sturbin." She drifted out of the room followed by Richard,

it had made fun of him.
Mrs. Griggs were usually the
had a particular gift of maki
lous.

But in any case he had th
and patient, some more con
mured too patient! He and l
close together in a tacit indulge
beautiful wives. Often, whe
Lucia were playing bridge or
ball, Jim Griggs would seek Da
would sit in a quiet corner, t
most often not talking at all.

"You alone?" said Jim Gri
the smoking room.

"Yep," David nodded sol
gar?"

"Thanks. Anything new?'

"No . . . there's a mine i
hoping will turn out a pretty g

separating them from the bridge players. An hour later, Emily Griggs came to fetch her husband.

"I knew you'd be here, old bear!" she said merrily, and tweaked his bushy mustache. She always talked to him in a nonsensically endearing way. She was a tall, dark-haired woman, with bruised circles under her great black eyes, and a wicked little red mouth. She liked to wear Spanish looking hats and audacious clothes.

"Come along, Jimsie."

Her husband rose, docile to her voice, smiling self-consciously at the touch of her rather playful, restless fingers.

When the two had gone, David turned to Lucia.

"Little girl, won't you send those people away and spend the evening, quietly, with me? I don't want to see even Richard to-night."

"Poor Richard!" she mocked lightly, but she came near to him, and in one of her rare moods of tenderness, slipped an arm around his neck, rubbing her cheek against his. "Don't you like those people, David?"

"Not when I want you alone."

"Silly goose!" Her voice faintly imitated that of Emily Griggs. "Don't be a mean old husband, Davy darling."

"I'm not . . . never that, but I do so long to have you to myself, Lucia."

"You shall . . . lots. We'll go away together. The season's nearly ended here now. But don't you like me to be beautiful and admired, David?"

"Of course I do."

He looked at her fondly. After all, she was only a child, his child, and it was natural for her to need much pleasure and many people.

But so that she should have her way in every charming fancy, every whimsical extravagance, he must work in grim earnest. For she played with luxuries as if they were soap bubbles, which was, however, as he had wished it to be. He had always said that his wife should be a queen among women.

He slaved harder than ever, at the dangerous game of buying mines, of selling them, of shuffling them like a pack of cards.

Fine lines of thought and care crept into his face, already he looked older. So the first season of their married life passed away.

CHAPTER XIX

NOW it was June. Society yielded to its migrating instincts and many of Lucia's friends left the city, in gayly colored bevies, searching for change of air, of friends, of diversions, of what not.

But there were a few who stayed on, the men because of their business, the wives because of their men. This narrowed circle continuing its habits of pleasure, found plenty of diversion. The young people played golf at the Presidio, played bridge, danced, sailed on the Bay, lunched and dined and gossiped; husbands worked.

Jim Griggs, who never took a holiday, continued patiently his lucrative profession, which was that of a lawyer. His pretty wife and Lucia were more inseparable than ever.

Richard Sturbin had taken a trip East, and returned with incredible rapidity. He seemed to have become Lucia's pet messenger boy, spending much of his time running errands for her and with her. There was an idle, decorative youth called Willie Dunlap, similarly occupied serving Mrs. Griggs, so these four managed to pass time merrily together.

David had once or twice spoken of moving into a hotel or renting a house of his own. But at any such ideas, he encountered voluble reproach from Richard, and protest from Lucia.

"Why, Davy, don't be silly. I'm so happy in this house," she said. "Mr. Sturbin would be hurt if we left."

So it ended, as most questions do where a woman is concerned, in a compromise.

They stayed, but David insisted upon sharing the rent, and paying three-quarters of the household expenses, which were by no means light.

He never scolded nor complained at Lucia's extravagant way of living. He saw her women friends spending money as fast and as easily as they could; he saw other husbands making the money to be spent. This seemed the natural course of things and of women. To David all married women were good and pure and liked to amuse themselves as children because they were married to honest men, and because it would never occur to them or to their husbands to be anything else. Lucia possessed him, heart, soul and body. She was never less wonderful to him, because she had become attainable. But she was an expensive luxury, and he must work to deserve her.

His mining combinations were growing in proportion and in importance. He managed his business as best he could, from his office; but that June there were unsatisfactory reports from a mine in Goldfield, which had promised great things and which he was on the point of buying. It became necessary for him to go to Goldfield.

The day he made up his mind to do this, it occurred to him that Lucia might come with him. Such a trip would be an interesting novelty to her.

She had never shown any curiosity about his affairs, nor indeed had he sought to interest her in them. But at last he was tired and ready to turn wistfully to her for encouragement and for support. For he felt the need of a tender, comprehending woman.

One evening he left his office early, and with steps that grew lighter, as he came near to the house, he hurried to find Lucia, confident of her loyal response.

Emily Griggs was coming out of the front door. He noticed with sudden disgust, that she had painted her mouth and that her eyebrows were artfully shaded. Her big eyes with the violet bruises beneath them, stared at him daringly. She wore an exaggeratedly wide-brimmed hat of patent leather and a severely cut tailor made suit.

"Home so early, Mr. Ghent?" she said in her deep, drawling voice.

"Yes," answered David coldly. "We business men sometimes take a holiday. I think perhaps you'll find your husband waiting for you, Mrs. Griggs, if you go home."

She smiled, with a mischievous curl of her lips. "Oh, probably, but I'm not going home yet. I've been having tea with Lucia."

"She's in then?" remarked David.

"Yes, for a wonder!" said Emily Griggs, and with a faintly mocking smile she moved away.

David opened the door and bounded up the stairs. Richard Sturbin was just coming out of the living-room. Strangely enough upon seeing him there David experienced a distinct feeling of displeasure.

"Hello! Davie," cried Richard Sturbin. "Home so early?"

"By chance," said David dryly.

"We've been having tea with your wife, Mrs. Griggs and I, and a quiet little game. You ought to play bridge, David."

"Not my style," said David, and without knocking, he walked into the room, while Richard Sturbin went his way downstairs.

Lucia was bending over a big bunch of violets, arranging them in a bowl. Cards were scattered on the green surface of the bridge table, and a tray of tea and cakes was standing on another table by the window.

She turned quickly, as David came in. He saw at once that her lips were reddened artificially in imitation of her friend, Emily Griggs.

"Why, Davie dear, what a nice surprise!" She moved gracefully across the room and would have kissed him.

"Take that stuff off first," he said, pointing to her mouth.

"How absurd you are! All women do it!" she cried.

"Not my wife, Lucia darling, you don't want to look like . . . a woman who isn't nice, do you?"

"The nicest women do it," she insisted.

He shook his head sadly. "I don't like it, dearie." In a small whirlwind of temper, she took out her handkerchief and scrubbed her lips; the handkerchief was stained in streaks of greasy red.

"That's my own sweet wife, now," said David

with relief, and kissed her tenderly, in spite of overcasting shadows in her eyes.

"Wouldn't you like to go away for a little while with me, Lucia?" Traces of temper vanished suddenly from her face.

"Yes, I'd love it. I was thinking the other day we might go to New York or Paris."

"Oh, no, girlie, not so far, I'm afraid. Not yet, anyhow! But I've got to go to Goldfield for a week or so and I thought you'd come with me."

"To Goldfield?" She turned and faced him so that he might see the expression of disappointment and dismay in her eyes.

"I must go, sweetheart, and I can't leave you for so long. Besides I hoped it might interest you to see a real camp and a real mine."

"Oh, but, David! I couldn't, with all those rough men, and that dreadful life you told me about."

"You'd have me with you, and those men are the salt of the earth," said David slowly.

"Oh, no, I couldn't," her voice rose nervously; her lips fastened to a thin line of resistance. "I couldn't."

"But you will, sweetheart," he said gently. "I can't leave you alone in the house with Dick."

"He's going away. He told me so."

"Anyhow, I can't," pursued David. Turning his back to her, so that she should not see the hurt in his eyes, he walked over to the window. The evening was full of mist. The sky was softly lowering.

The Golden Gate and the Presidio were cloaked in gray. San Francisco looked like a ghost city.

Behind him Lucia moved restlessly. Soon she came up and put a hand on his arm.

"David!"

He did not answer.

"Davie, do leave me here."

"No, Lucia. I want you with me."

Then she flung away from him, and all the planned joy of the trip was dead.

"You can take a friend with you," he said and wheeling away from the window, he went to the door. He felt just then, as if he must leave her and be alone.

"Nobody would go," argued Lucia.

"Yes, they would," he replied. "Anyway, try and see."

He left her, sadly wondering if, after all, he had asked too much of a sacrifice from her. But it had seemed so natural that a wife should follow her husband, wherever he went. Loneliness which was hidden in his soul, the ache of feeling that perhaps Lucia was too young, too beautiful to share the cruel realities of a man's life, surged forward now and took definite shape.

That very evening, as they were returning from a dinner where Lucia had been more radiant than usual, she said to him:

"Emily's going with us."

"That's fine," he cried joyfully, eliminating a possible question of his dislike for Emily Griggs, and

only conscious of a warm feeling of gratitude for Lucia's obedience to his wishes.

"Honest, it won't be bad, dearie," he assured her. But her manner was not enthusiastic.

"Well, it's a test of Emily's friendship," she remarked coldly.

There was a pathetic note in Jim Griggs' voice, when seeing David at lunch the next day, he said:

"I'm glad Emily is taking a trip with you, David."

"It's a great comfort to Lucia," answered David.

But the journey to Goldfield proved a hard one for the two women. There was eighty miles of blistering desert to cross, with the drive of alkali in their eyes, and suffocating heat, and dry waste all round them. They sat gasping for breath, moistened handkerchiefs held to their mouths. Beads of heat dropped from Lucia's forehead. From time to time she turned reproachful eyes to her husband.

"I hope you are satisfied to have brought us here," she murmured. The sky stretched away like a big blue blister, and the desert lay in cracked endless billows. It was twilight when at last they reached Goldfield. There they found a little mining camp, with a one-storeyed hotel squatting in the midst of crude desolation.

At sight of it David was glad.

Lucia and Emily Griggs, prostrated by heat and fatigue followed him meekly into the hotel. Several miners lounging in the hall, greeted David as an old friend.

The rooms intended for the women proved to be very small, with low ceilings, peeling wall-paper and cracked washing bowls and pitchers. Lucia gave a despairing look around her and sank on the bed ready to cry.

Emily Griggs began to giggle.

David had been prepared to joke away discomfort. But he had not measured the distance between women like his wife and her friend and any such life as this. Lucia seemed to have wilted like a flower out of water. The tip of her nose was shiny; she had grown very pale and did not attempt to speak.

"Well, here we are, girls," cried David, with more show of optimism than he felt.

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and a man called Eddie Mead appeared, sheepish and overwhelmed with embarrassment at the sight of the two young women.

David had not seen Eddie Mead since the days in Stone Valley and he was unfeignedly glad at finding him here. Unobserving of Lucia's signaling frowns, he dragged the tall blushing miner into the room.

"Glad to see you, Eddie; I want you to know my wife." Eddie Mead stammered unintelligible greetings to Lucia and Mrs. Griggs. Then he turned to David, as if relieved to speak his own language with one of his kind.

"Say, Dave," he said, "Steve . . . you know, Steve Lark. He says he knew you in Cobalt. He's in the camp. He's heard you've arrived."

"Of course I remember Steve," said David eagerly. "I'll be glad to see him."

Eddie Mead cast a dubious look at the two women and lowered his voice.

"He's asking to see you. He's a mighty sick man just now. He had a little difference over a poker game a few days ago, with Reddy Stokes, and Reddy put a bullet into him." Lucia slid from the bed and came nearer, with wide open terrified eyes.

"Oh, do they shoot one another here, David? I want to go away at once."

Eddie Mead turned to her soothingly.

"Oh, it ain't nothing, Missis Ghent," he said. "Don't you worry. But Reddy Stokes isn't convenient-like. And Steve lost his nerve. He'd . . . he'd like to see you, Dave; he seems particular fond of you!"

David nodded. "That's all right, Eddie. Tell him I'll be right along."

Whereupon Eddie Mead bowed awkwardly and backed out of the room.

"You're not going to see that man?" cried Lucia hysterically. "David, I forbid you to go. Suppose that other dreadful person shoots you too. I'd like to know what would become of us."

Emily Griggs gave an artificial little shiver. "Gracious, don't leave us, Mr. Ghent."

David put his hand on Lucia's shoulder. "Listen to me, dearie," he said, in a slow patient voice. "You don't understand. There won't be any trouble. But I've got to go and see Steve. What would he think of me if I didn't?"

"I never heard of such a thing," wailed Lucia.

"Leaving us alone here in a hotel full of strange men. And we haven't even had any dinner."

"I'll have some sent up to your room, dearie. Do be my sensible little wife." But David looking at the two women read in their manner inexorable feminine condemnation. Lucia would not even look at him. So presently he left the room and went downstairs, where he was exuberantly greeted by several demonstrative loungers, who invited him to drink with them. But he was taciturn, and already reproached himself with having been selfish. He should not have brought Lucia with him.

It was with a heavy heart that, after ordering a simple supper sent up to the women, he started out to find Steve Lark's cabin.

Yet, even troubled and worried as he was, a sense of freedom and of warmth gradually came over him. The red setting sun, the heat, the uncouth shacks grouped round the hotel, the loafing figures of men who passed him, some of them old "Pals" of his, were all familiar and pleasant sights. It was as if he had swung back to the beginning, when he had belonged to this life and only to this life.

Steve Lark in high fever, with his right shoulder clumsily bandaged, lay on a narrow cot. The one roomed cabin was in hopeless disorder: boots, shirts, empty whisky bottles and a few primitive kitchen utensils thrown in heaps on the pine table and on the uncarpeted floor. A lanky man sitting by the cot, rose at David's entrance, and creaked across the floor.

"He's mighty bad, but I can't stay to-night," he

whispered to David, "the boys have took turns watching him. I'm on the night shift and I've got to get along."

"I shan't leave him," said David soberly.

Steve Lark was murmuring troubled words and curses. He clung to David now like a little child. When later Eddie Mead tiptoed in and tried to take David's place, the sick man raved and wept.

"Davie, don't you go. Don't let Reddy ketch me. I'm a goner, sure. . . . He's hanging round here, I know he is. . . . Dave, you stay!"

David and Eddie looked at one another in perplexity.

"I'll have to stay," said David. "He's too sick a man to go against him."

Eddie scratched his head reflectively.

"Looks like it."

"You go and tell my wife, Eddie; explain it to her, will you, and say,—see that she and Mrs. Griggs are all right, will you? Stay around, so that if they get frightened in the night, you will be right there."

"I'll take care of them all right," promised Eddie Mead. "There's coffee on the stove, Dave, and whisky on the table."

"Thanks, I guess I'll have some coffee."

Eddie Mead looked around the room, settled his soft felt hat over his eyes and strode away.

"Say, Dave," whispered the sick man, "you see that shooting iron on the table. . . . If Reddy comes around, promise me to kill him like a dog."

"Sure, old man," said David soothingly.

All that night he watched. The sick man, his eyes bloodshot, his cheeks sunken, his long brown beard unkempt, talked and raved. A loaded revolver lay on the table. But David watched in peace. No blood-thirsty Reddy lurked about the camp, no sinister shadow darkened the doorway. The night was quiet, except for the stray cry of a coyote, or the baying of a dog, or the plaintive screech of some night bird.

Once, when the sick man sank into a fitful state of slumber, David tiptoed to the door of the cabin and cautiously opened it. There was the wasted wafer of a moon sadly drifting in a sky that was a desert peopled by ghostly stars. From the door of the cabin David could see other crudely built dwellings, huddled in the wan gleam; and also the hotel which looked like a homely, square wooden box. He hoped that Lucia was asleep. A great longing swept suddenly over him, a longing to run out into the night, to find Lucia and clasp her in his arms; to assure himself that she was alive and real. For she seemed so far away.

Then, in place of the longing, came an infinite sadness, unanalyzed, unshaped in his mind. He felt the grip of elemental things; the mysterious fusion of men and earth into a same dense secret: the peace of the night that brooded over sleeping men who sweated during the day, those who worked as the earth works, in a perpetual shift and strife.

He was proud to be a man who worked. He was proud to be a man who owned a beautiful woman like Lucia. His heart grew tender with

pity for her in this primitive place where he had brought her. He must spend his life working, making her comfortable, so that she could lie warm in his arms; so that he might take delight in her. Her candid blue eyes seemed to look down on him from the half moon in the sky.

Then the sick man stirred and moaned. David turned back into the cabin and gently closed the door.

Soon it was dawn. Nasturtium colored fires kindled in the sky. Shadowy figures of men strode towards the mines, whose work had not stopped all the night.

At early morning Steve Lark slept soundly like a child. Then David left him and hurried back to the hotel. Eddie Mead with sunken eyes that spoke of a sleepless night, stood at the bar, drinking strong, bitter smelling coffee.

"They're all right," he said to David in a low voice, as if afraid of waking someone. "The Missis didn't seem keen about your staying with Steve, but I guess I fixed it up for you."

"Thank you, Eddie," said David heartily.

"I stayed in the room next to theirs all night. They could have called me any minute. I was dressed and ready."

"You're a corker, Eddie."

"That's nothing. She's a mighty pretty girl, Dave. But this isn't any place for her."

"I'm afraid not," David agreed sadly.

He, himself, carried a tray with coffee and bread up to the room, and listened cautiously before knock-

ing, until he heard whispering. Then he tapped on the door.

"Who's there?" called out Lucia in a startled voice.

"It's me, David."

"Well, it's about time." The voice changed to a pitch of indignation, and Lucia flung the door open. He saw that she and Emily Griggs were fully dressed.

"David Ghent," cried his wife, "I am going home this morning. Nothing can keep me here another day."

David trod awkwardly into the room, and set the tray on the table.

"Why, Lucia! Why, don't be so hasty!"

"Hasty! Well, I like that!" scolded Lucia. She darted at the coffee, lifted the lid of the pot and made a wry face, "Ugh, what stuff!"

Emily Griggs walked to the window and looked out.

"We've had an awful night, Mr. Ghent," she said. "We thought we'd be murdered."

"You've never been safer in your lives than right here," said David. "Why, Eddie Mead never went to bed, just so in case you needed anything in the night, he'd be right around."

"That shows how dangerous it must have been," retorted Lucia. "And you leaving us for a crazy sick man."

"I couldn't help it, dearie."

Lucia began to pour out the coffee.

"Well, I'm going home to-day. Emily says she

won't stay another minute, and I won't either. You can do as you please."

David looked at his wife. He had never seen her in this mood. "Girlie dear, if you feel that way about it, I guess you'd better go," he said gently.

"We ought never to have come," continued Lucia.

"We had an awful night, Mr. Ghent," said Emily Griggs again, who in spite of the night had managed to powder her face and tint her lips red and fix her hair becomingly.

David felt that the two women were against him and that it was useless to argue with them, so he went downstairs to make arrangements for their departure. He could not go with them, but the faithful Eddie Mead offered to escort them across the desert and land them safely at the railway station.

As soon as Lucia knew that she was leaving, she became tender and repentant, and clung to David.

"I'm so sorry, dear, but I really couldn't stay. I'd die here."

"I don't suppose you could," said he soberly.

"You'll come home soon," she coaxed, with sweet blue eyes.

"As soon as I can, girlie. But I'm afraid it won't be for another week."

She hid her head on his shoulder and said quietly, "Forgive me, David."

David forgave. He thought that, after all, she was right to go. So she and Emily Griggs left him there, and he found no blame for them in his heart.

CHAPTER XX

ONE evening, a week later, David came back to San Francisco. He had not told Lucia when to expect him. He thought with boyish pleasure and confidence of her surprise, and as he drove from the station to the house on Jackson Street, the old feeling of loneliness, which had been with him recently, seemed to disperse like mist, leaving a hopeful buoyancy in its place. He decided that since his trip to Goldfield had been a successful one, he would take Lucia away on a real trip this time, on a honeymoon, not too far from his business; where he could feel that she was comfortable and happy.

He swung his valise lightly from the carriage, fitted the key in the lock of the front door and opening it wide, stepped into the hall. Richard Sturbin was coming down the stairs. He was whistling a gay little tune that cracked on a high note when he saw David.

David bent, set his valise on a chair and came forward, his eyebrows knit in a sudden frown.

"I thought you were away, Dick," he said bluntly.

Richard Sturbin, after a fleeting pause, midway on the stairs, hurried down and joined David.

"So I was. Only got back from Chicago last night. I was surprised to find your wife here."

"She must have been surprised to see you," remarked David curtly. "Where is she?"

"Oh, in her room, I think," said Richard Sturbin.

"Thanks." David took up his valise and started for the stairs.

"Had any dinner?" asked Sturbin.

"Yes, thanks, on the train."

"Oh, all right. Nothing I can do for you? I'm off to the Club then. Good night, Dave."

"Good night, Dick."

Richard Sturbin opened and clicked the front door quickly, as he went out. Then the house sank into quiet. Only the great clock in the hall struck nine solemn tones.

David bounded up the stairs, two at a time, and reaching the door of his wife's room, knocked gently.

"Come in," she called.

She was sitting at a pink draped dressing table, her back to the door. She was brushing her hair. Light flooded upon the long silken wheat colored strands. David caught a dazzling impression of pink and white and gold. The room smelt of violets. Her arm was raised flexibly and the silver brush gleamed as she ran it down her hair. Then she saw David in the mirror and gave a quick start.

"Thought I was a burglar, did you?" he cried boisterously, and striding forward, in a twinkling had her in his arms. Her hair clung and tossed over his shoulder in long live twists. He forgot everything but the delight of holding her again.

When he let her go she was flushed and curiously nervous. She began to talk vivaciously, fluttering

about the room, like a bird, the long silken wing-like folds of her gown, floating about her feet.

David flung himself luxuriously into a chair by the dressing table, fingering the silver things spread over its white muslin surface. The room closed about him with sweet feminine subtlety.

"Why, Davy, I didn't expect you back so soon. Have you dined?"

"Yes, dearie, Dick asked me that. I met him as I came in. By the way, Lucia," David's voice grew serious, "it didn't look very well for you and he to have been in the house while I was away."

Her back was to him. She bent over a bowl of roses and as she played with them, their petals scattered.

"Oh, yes," she said, "but I didn't know he would be here."

"Of course not, dearie," David turned and returned a small silver box, squinting at it as if it were a particularly fine work of art.

"I've been thinking though, that we'd better move into an apartment or house of our own. We'd be more to ourselves."

"I think so too," agreed Lucia quickly.

"Well, if things keep on as they are going now, I guess it could be a house."

With a sudden nervous movement, he put the silver box down and jumped to his feet.

"Yes, girlie dear, if things keep on in this way, you can have your own house."

The big gilt-framed mirror over the mantelpiece

reflected the room and Lucia and David, but with a sense of unreality, as if it were all only a picture seen through a lambent sheet of water.

David was tired. He stretched his arms until the muscles cracked, and yawned frankly.

"Guess I'll get my things off, girlie, if you don't mind."

"Yes, do," said Lucia.

At the sound of her voice, he looked up with sudden intentness. "Why, sweetheart, you're pale and worn. Aren't you well?" He went over to her and put his hand under her chin. "Let me see you. Aren't you feeling well?"

She smiled faintly. "Oh, yes, David! Oh, really yes!"

But as she stood beside him, she seemed to droop like a wilted flower. She did not look at him and the hands he touched were very cold.

"You need to rest," he said, and as gently as if she were a child, he carried her to the bed, slipped off the silken dressing gown and tucked her in the sheets. She turned her face away from him. Among the pillows her head looked very small; her hair spread wide in a light golden aura. He bent and kissed her on the forehead.

"I'll be with you in a minute, sweetheart."

Then he trod on tiptoe to the adjoining dressing-room, leaving the door ajar.

He started to undress with as little noise as possible and had slipped off his coat and waistcoat, when he heard a silent stifled gasp in the next room; it

seemed nothing but a sharp intake of breath, but he laid his collar quickly on the table and stopped further movement, to listen.

He had not been mistaken. There came another sound like a whimper and the rasp of a sob. Lucia was crying.

Then he rushed into the room.

She was lying her face pressed against the pillow. Beneath the sheets the long line of her body shook in trembling waves of only half suppressed plaint.

"What is it," cried David.

At his voice she controlled herself no longer.

With a sharp catch of breath, and little moans that mounted chromatically to a high note of distress, and sank to wavering sighs; her shoulders heaving, she cried aloud now, hopelessly.

David bewildered and distraught, dashed forward.

"What is it, my girlie? What is the matter? Are you sick? Are you in pain?"

With a sudden swift motion, she tossed aside the sheets flung herself from the bed, and without slippers, in her long fleecy nightgown, ran to him and put her arms round his neck.

"Oh, David! . . . Oh, David!"

"Little girl, what is it? I haven't done anything that's hurt you, have I?"

He held her to him ransacking his brain in rapid tormented search for the cause of her tears. He could find nothing.

She swayed trembling and shivering in his arms, unable to speak, sobbing on as if her heart would break.

"And you?" he said slowly. "You're too good and sweet. I know you never did anything."

She stopped crying, all of a sudden. He felt her body stiffening. There was a pause that seemed interminable. Then in so low a voice that he had to bend his head to hear, she murmured, "I have done something."

"You . . . What?" He tried to hold her away from him, so that he might look into her face, but she kept her eyes obstinately averted, and still clung to him. He put his hand up and touched her hair, and she started sobbing wildly.

"You must know!"

Her teeth were chattering as if with cold. He unclasped her arms slowly from his neck, and going to the bed took up the pink silk dressing gown which he threw over her shoulders.

"Sit down now, girlie, and tell me all about it."

A vague sentiment of dread, almost suffocated him. He paced the room as he waited for her to begin. She flopped on the bed and huddled there, bowed and crushed, in her pink silk and lace, strands of hair moistened by her tears, clinging to her cheek and neck.

"Well, girlie?" he said finally, and stood still in front of her, his gray eyes keen and steady, his lean figure erect. She began to rock softly back and forth. "I . . . I was not well when I got back from the trip. . . . I was more nervous than you thought. One night . . . Oh, Davie, I can't," her voice broke into a wail.

"You must, girlie, you must tell me," said David

quietly. He was staring at a brass knob at the foot of the bed. The knob seemed to grow larger, to swell to a golden balloon ready to burst at a touch. The room seemed curiously impalpable. "You must."

"One night," she went on in quick hurried gasps, "one night Dick came home . . . I thought he was away . . . Oh, Davie."

"Well?"

"He . . . we'd flirted a little before. . . . But I swear, Davie, there had been nothing . . . nothing. I . . . He came in here one night late! I'd forgotten to lock the door."

She covered her face in her hands and bowed her head.

David stood rigidly. He held on now to the brass knob of the bed; the muscles of his hands were white gnarled knots. "And you?" His voice forced itself past a tangle of strangled roots in his throat. The room was so quiet that it seemed to have dropped away and left him and Lucia in space, facing one another.

"He kissed me. I was so weak . . . I didn't know what I was doing. . . . Oh, you shouldn't have left me. . . ."

She fell flat on the bed, her face buried in the rumpled sheet, shaking and trembling and sobbing like a child in mortal agony.

"Good God," whispered David. His face had grown the color of stone. He did not move.

The shapeless heap of lace and pink and wheat colored hair, wept and moaned in a descending scale

of exhaustion. "I didn't know . . . I was mad. . . . Oh, I never thought I could do such a thing."

David's hand dropped from the brass knob. He walked like a machine into the next room and began to dress. He put on his waistcoat, his collar and tie, his coat. His gestures were short and crisp.

In the bedroom, sobs and wails rose at irregular intervals. With curious precision, he came back into the room and fumbled at his valise which was lying on a chair.

"David! . . . David, what are you going to do?" She raised her head and looked at him. Her face was sodden, her eyelids swollen, her cheeks streaked and stained with tears.

He flung open the valise and carefully took from beneath a pile of shirts, a revolver.

"Oh . . . Oh . . ." gasped Lucia, and ramping and scrambling, she slid from the bed. "You're not going to kill me. . . . Davie, put it away, take it away." Her voice rose to a scream of abject fear.

"No," said David slowly fingering the revolver. "No, not you." Disheveled and moaning she stumbled over to him.

"If you kill him, I'll kill myself too. I'll kill myself anyway," her voice continued in a thin shriek.

"Well, I guess not!" said David and put the revolver in his pocket. She flung herself at him, clutching weakly at his pocket, but she might as well have striven against a rock.

"What are you going to do? . . . David, don't

do anything desperate. I swear . . . I lied . . . I . . . I . . . I'll go away, you need never see me again. But don't kill. . . . David don't."

She caught at him with feeble disconnected movements, struggling and clawing at his coat, at his arm, at his neck.

He grabbed her suddenly and held her still in a vicelike grip, his hands on her shoulder.

"Now listen," he said. His eyes seemed to have burned to points of fire; he spoke slowly, as if he were talking to himself. "Now listen . . . you're a young girl, my wife. I don't believe you're bad. . . . Not with that face. You've the face of a Madonna . . . No, I can't believe you bad. No woman that I have loved as I've loved you could be bad."

His throat was dry and burning. His voice sank to huskiness.

"No! I'm not bad, Davie, I'm not bad."

"I don't believe you are!"

He was suffering as a priest suffers when an idol is sullied; as a man suffers when a belief is tarnished. He was suffering before a pitiful desecration of all that had been beautiful; his flesh was suffering as if it had been buried with something leprous that it loved in spite of the mark of the unclean. "Oh, I don't believe you could do wrong willingly," he cried aloud.

Her eyes were a sad, sad, veiled blue, in answer to his cry which was the cry of a man defending his faith.

"What are you going to do . . . with that?"

she whispered, and her fingers clawed again at his pocket.

"Kill the man," he said simply.

"David, for God's sake, not that. I'll die if you do that."

She clung to him again so desperately that he could hardly move. The moisture of her tears rubbed against his cheeks. He could smell the perfume of her hair and see her blue eyes like drowned things.

As she struggled she slid to the floor, and lay crumpled there, an abject, hysterical thing, that wept and moaned and pleaded incoherently.

"Do you love him?"

David's voice was so quiet, that he seemed to be asking an unimportant question.

"No, no!" her voice was only a whisper of sound.

Then he bent to pick her up, but her body had grown heavy, and he was shocked to the very soul to see her on the floor at his feet. She looked as if she were dying of shame and fear. He seemed dragged down, abased by her abandonment to this humiliation. He tugged at her arm. "Get up . . . Lucia, get up."

"Don't shoot him . . . don't, David."

"Get up."

He realized suddenly one thing: no matter the cause, he was torturing a woman, and a child. A limitless pity that was almost paternal entered his soul, and mounted gently in waves, a pity for him, for her. He could have fallen on his knees beside

her and sobbed with her. She was a mystery of the fallible, of the eternal and erring child, at the mercy of the betrayed and betrayer. Her weeping tore and rent aside his dreams and his vanity. Gradually as he looked down at her, she ceased to seem a child. She was nothing but a poor maimed animal.

Then David became sublime, beyond the law. His flesh was mortified, his egoism crushed. All in him was withered as a dry leaf floating on a black sea.

He pardoned her.

The fierce necessity to kill was quenched like a burning brand falling in the deep black waters. He bent again and this time managed to lift her up.

" I won't harm him," he promised drearily.

Her sobbing sank to intermittent little gasps; she was weary and he was weary. She tried to hide her face on his shoulder, but his shoulder was as indifferent as the earth itself. The revolver in his pocket dragged downward a dead weight.

The pride of the conqueror, of the outraged man, strove no longer within him, as he lifted her and laid her on the bed.

Once he looked round at the old rose room, and the bowl of flowers, and the silver trinkets strewn on the dressing table and a few soft limp trifles on a chair.

Then as if he were leaving a sick room, he tiptoed away and closed the door behind him.

The hall was dark. He groped down it to his own room on the other side of the living room. He had so rarely slept there, that to-night his bed was not

even made. But this he did not notice. He left the room dark. Light would have burned his eyes. He felt his way like a blind man to the bed and fell heavily upon it.

Then as the shadows burst upon him, and desolation spread in wide waves that touched no shore, he felt again as a little boy, lying flat on the grass near an old stone bench. Suffering all he knew how to suffer, he would have dug his nails into the earth, buried his face in bitter sweet grass and stayed so for uncounted time. . . .

He began to shiver. His shoulders heaved, and great heavy sobs, as heavy as the world itself, fought passage through unutterable grief, to sound. He cried in a terrible hopeless abandonment of control. He seemed to be crying for air at the bottom of a pit.

The image of Lucia set aside in a sad shrine, watched over him.

He cried for a long time and then lay quiet, while hours rolled upon him and ground him down. He thought that he had always been fair and honest to men and women. Yet a man had done him this vile trick; a man had destroyed what was his, and what had been pure. It was the law that the man should in turn be destroyed. He had foregone that law and he was not appeased; secretly with him too, was the question of flesh. What he had held and known, what he had desired, because it was unique and forbidden to other men, he had shared now with a man. The disgust of it nauseated him, for he knew that his body was not yet cured of its craving.

Lucia had the face of a Madonna; the blue eyes

of Spring, of children, of a lake, of youth, and the body of a nymph. Lucia was helpless. Her passion was not conscious of itself. She was ripe fruit for the hungry, wine for the thirsty. She would be destroyed by the hungry and thirsty if he did not forgive her and keep her, if he did not hide her weakness from men.

Of the one man there would be no more, in secret slow time and thought, for there were other ways than killing.

But Lucia had passed the test of fire. She held him now because of a nameless worship of womanhood.

Dawn came at last and found him dry eyed, gray faced and stern.

CHAPTER XXI

LATE that morning he knocked at his wife's door. She was sitting in front of her dressing table, rubbing her cheeks delicately with rouge. A little box of rouge lay beside her. Powder and perfume and manicuring instruments were scattered within reach of her busy fingers. She wore a white tea-gown and she looked very sweet and fragile. David closing the door stood with his back against it.

"I don't want you to put such stuff on your face," he said and pointed to the little box.

"I looked so pale this morning," she murmured. Suddenly clasping her hands together, she ran towards him, "David, will you ever forgive me! You have been so noble, so good."

"I do forgive you, child."

"I'll spend my life trying to make it up to you." There was a catch in her voice that forewarned tears.

A gentle morning mist stole in through the open window and floated wanly, touching her wheat colored hair, the faintly tinted pink cheeks, the white of her dress.

David looked at her bravely. "You and I are going to begin again, girlie, see? But on one condition! We leave this house at once. Of course you never speak to that cad again."

"Never," cried Lucia passionately. "But, oh, it wasn't my fault, Davie, it really wasn't. . . ."

"Hush," said David in a low voice. "We mustn't speak of that again."

She came close to him, her eyes imploring a promise. "But if you see him. . . ."

David hesitated, his hands clenching themselves in a gesture of violence. Then he shook his head sadly.

"I won't touch him," he promised; but he felt as if he were swearing away his manhood.

"You are wonderful and big hearted," she cried.

"No," he said earnestly. "No, it isn't that, Lucia. But I feel you can be straight, and I feel that I've kind of got to take care of you. Once I promised your father I would. You didn't know that? Anyway this is a terrible lesson to you, and perhaps we will both be better for it."

"I swear . . ." she began.

"None of that . . . none of that . . . We'll say no more about it". . . . He walked over to her and put out his hand. "Shake on it, girl."

Her hand was warm and moist and small; her thin lips curved pathetically.

"You'll never be sorry, David."

"I know I won't be," he said. "Now sit down and write what I tell you."

"Not to him?"

"Yes, this thing's going to be cleared up once and for all."

She sank submissively into a chair before the little white desk and pulled notepaper towards her.

David strode up and down the room, smoking a cigar and dictating in a short, sharp voice.

"Write —! 'I have told my husband what has happened. He has forgiven me. But never dare to speak to me again, or he will kill you!'"

She turned quickly in her chair, "But you promised!"

"Write what I tell you," said David. "If I ever see him again, I may not be able to control myself."

She bent her head obediently after that and wrote as he wished.

"'Or he will kill you. We leave your house at once!' — Sign Lucia Ghent,— no, don't sign. It's useless."

When she had finished, she handed him the letter. He rang the bell at once and gave it to the maid who came to answer.

"Now," said David, "pack your things, Lucia, I'm going to the Palace Hotel to order rooms."

"Will we live there?" she asked meekly.

"For a few days. Later on I'll find a house for you."

He could not kiss her that morning, though she lifted her face, as if expectantly. Nor did he kiss her for many days afterwards. But he was always very gentle, and never by look or word reminded her of what had come between them.

As for Richard Sturbin, he evidently left the house at once. In any case David did not see him again till years later.

Once moved to the hotel, he went out every day now, househunting. But he went like an old man,

joyless, slow-footed, taciturn. Lucia stayed in her room all day long, pleading illness and refusing to see her friends. Sometimes when he came home, he would find her crying softly. Then the same great pity welled in his heart, as he had felt the night she lay on the floor at his feet. She seemed so young, so fragile,— so subdued.

There were, as a matter of fact, very few of the "gay set" left in San Francisco; so little comment was aroused by Lucia's willful seclusion. David did not need to explain to men his reason for suddenly changing his home; but he avoided his friends for a time as Lucia avoided hers. He could not have borne just then a cordial hand clasp even from Jim Griggs.

One day, he found a pretty house all ready furnished on Nob Hill. . . . It was much more expensive than he had planned for; but he wanted above all to please Lucia. So he signed a year's lease and he and she went to start their new life in this house. As he had hoped it would be, Lucia revived to a languid interest, when she found herself in a house of her own.

"I hate hotels. This *is* nice!" she said to David with a little sigh of luxury.

The first days of getting settled diverted her mind and seemed to swing her back into a greater and renewed confidence in the future. She engaged servants, and went tirelessly from room to room, changing the furniture about, taking down and putting up pictures, altering the position of ornaments, playing indeed as a child with a doll house. David

would come home late from his office, and find her standing in one of the rooms, her head cocked on one side, with the gesture of a painter squinting at a color arrangement.

"How do you like it so?"

"Oh, it looks all right," he would always say.

The truth was that for him, just then, the heart had gone out of all things. Even his business no longer interested him. That was the worst of it. An abnormal apathy had taken the place of his old dynamic energy, his ambition, his pride among men. Nothing could have aroused him in these days, except to kill Richard Sturbin. But Richard Sturbin had left San Francisco, and his house was for sale.

So day after day, through the long hot summer, David went mechanically to his office on Market Street, and tried to deal with big mining questions that needed all the cool-headed resourcefulness of a wide awake mind.

On his desk in a red leather frame, there was a little faded snapshot photograph of Lucia. She was standing hatless, on a balcony; her small head was tilted back, she was smiling like a child. He would sit by the hour in his desk chair, brooding and staring wistfully at that photograph. In the meantime telegrams would be collecting; men would be waiting to see him; and the option of mines would be lying in the hollow of his hand.

Once, Jim Griggs, looking older than ever, came in while he was sitting so.

David sprang up like a guilty man.

"Never see you any more," said Jim Griggs. "What have you been up to?"

"Business . . . Business," cried David with forced heartiness, but he felt the near sighted kind eyes of his friend peering at him through his glasses.

"Hum!" grunted Jim Griggs. "You look as if you needed a holiday."

David noticing the worn lines in the older man's face, the stoop of his shoulders, retorted, "So do you."

"I can't afford it. My wife takes it for me. But you're getting to be quite a millionaire, Davie, you ought to get away."

David waved to a pile of telegrams lying on his desk. He had not even glanced through them.

"Well," said Griggs slowly, "I guess you're right. I don't see any holiday for you."

David did not want rest. Feverishly he strove to conquer himself and regain his former energy. He gambled recklessly with mines, buying and selling them as if they were toys. He sent prospectors to every new camp where "booms" were announced; he founded syndicates and developed companies. He mortgaged one mine to buy another. The result of all this was that insensibly, a sea of obligations mounted high around him.

It came to be autumn. Lucia had crept gradually back to warmth and joy of life. For days and weeks now, she remained the model of a loving wife. He always found her waiting for him these days when he came back from his office in the evening.

She would say, "Tired, Davie?"

"No, little girl."

"I've laid out your clothes for you, and there's a flower for your buttonhole."

"Thank you, dearie," and he would kiss her gently, as if he were her father.

But one day he snatched her passionately in his arms and strained her to him as a lover clasps his mistress; as he had not done for months. She blushed; her blue eyes grew suddenly languid. To love her again was a pain that was like the opening of an old wound. Yet he had been sick for the feel of her, for the joy of her beauty.

She seemed to have forgotten everything unhappy, and skimmed easily into another season of excitement and worldly pleasures,— as easily indeed as a gay colored sailing boat slips into smooth water. But David had not forgotten. He looked at her sometimes, with the dull ache in his heart of a man doubting beauty itself. Then to stifle thought, to stifle doubts, he would love her more passionately than ever, until it happened that his need of her became overwhelming, stronger than his pride, than his peace of soul. She was his wife. To many a man the woman who is his wife remains forever an irresponsibly seductive child, a simple complement, as it were of his egoism. She can do no wrong, meaning to do wrong deliberately. But if by chance her weakness be flung at him in such a manner that he as husband must acknowledge it, he ascribed it hastily to other and outside forces. Thus comfortably assured against damage to his vanity, he entrusts her among his brothers. For she of herself can

have no evil thought, and until he catches him at a dishonest game, neither can his fellowman. David felt, to her everlasting secret shame, that Lucia had been the victim of a scoundrel. He did not count the scoundrels in the world. He labored only to imagine Lucia still high and pure, so that his forgiveness might have no reserve.

Meanwhile, surrounded by adulation and means of pleasure, Lucia lived easily, spending much money and making many debts. David humored her extravagances because he did not measure their danger. He always gave without grudging, especially when she asked him for money to send to her father, who was then in Colorado, or to her mother who had taken an apartment in Paris.

Although letters often came from Mrs. Earle, Lucia seldom read or gave them to her husband. Sometimes he would request to see one but she always gave a careless excuse for not sharing them with him.

Gradually Lucia's domestic virtue, born of repentance, fell away. As it had once been, David again most often found the house empty when he returned from his office evenings, or else frivolously upset by some gay party of bridge players. Emily Griggs was back from Sacramento, and the intimacy continued between the two young women. David dimly realized that this friendship was bad for Lucia. Emily Griggs always had a train of idle young men hanging about her, who dallied at business, and the rest of the time seemed ready to go almost anywhere, or do almost anything with a pretty woman. David

felt for these youths, the good natured contempt of a man who is obliged to work in grim earnest. But he did not care to see them so much at ease with his wife. When, however, he sometimes remonstrated with her, her lips closed in the old obstinate line; her eyes flashed signals of feminine warfare, and she became sarcastic.

"They're decorative and well dressed," she once told him in an exasperated flutter of temper, adding, "which is more than you have ever been."

This remark so rankled and hurt David, that for many days he brooded over it in silence. Then one day he asked her point blank.

"Lucia, would you have liked me to be like one of those young empty-headed poodles that you are so fond of being seen with around town?"

She tossed back her head and raised her eyebrows.

"I can't imagine you like them," she said.

"But if I was," persisted David, fixing keen gray eyes upon her. She laughed and kissed his forehead with a faintly patronizing tenderness. "They're not born to be husbands as you are," she said. David wondered afterwards what she had meant.

On Christmas night, Emily Griggs gave a dance. David looking careworn, deep lines of fatigue and strain in his face, was in no mood for social effort. But Lucia radiantly disposed seemed like a beautiful light yellow and pink flower. Her wheat colored hair was piled high on her small head; her eyes glistened like pools reflecting a summer sky; her lips were pink.

As they drove to the dance, David overcoming his

weariness, turned to her: "No one there will be as beautiful as you, girlie." He felt suddenly a great joy to think that this woman was his, forgetting all else but her beauty and his right over her. He would have kissed her in the carriage on their way to the dance, but she pushed him gently away.

"You'll muss me, Davie. You can kiss my hand." With this he was forced to be content.

She floated into the ballroom ahead of him. He was content to follow, desiring no other pleasure than that of watching her. In the big room from which rugs and furniture had been removed for the dancing, she swayed gracefully among other women. No one of them was so beautiful.

He lounged in the doorway, where he might see her. When she was not dancing, she stood surrounded by admirers, waving with languid skill a great black feather fan he had given her for Christmas. She smiled often, and her gestures were feline.

As David watched her, his heart began to beat with smothering rapidity and his throat grew dry. It seemed to him suddenly that her gown was cut too low. Her arms and neck should not be offered so for the gaze of other men. He was filled with quick inexplicable disgust and rebellion against such show, resenting, with an impulse of almost primitive savagery, his wife being like other women. For in the glitter of lights, in the ceaseless move and drift of these gayly colored beings, in the interchange of smiles and looks, he caught a remote suggestion of something subtle and sensuous. The women were on parade, however innocent. As for the men, be-

neath their conventional ease of manner, behind the immaculacy of their white shirt fronts, stirred furtive things, undeclared.

Lucia was smiling at Stanton Gray, a man whom David had often seen at her teas. He was a good looking youth, with expressive brown eyes and a short, blond mustache. David had always rather liked him. But now, for no particular reason, he resented this man's nearness to his wife. There came to him a fleeting nostalgic image of vast starlit nights in mining camps, of the crude, simple existence of big hearted men, and the serene face of Father Dunlap, of mountain peaks and pine trees. He turned away irritably from the dancing and babble of voices and lights, and strode without much caring where he went, into the conservatory, a carefully heated place. There in a discreet corner, hidden behind a fan-shaped bank of foliage, the strains of a waltz reached him faintly. He lit a cigar and settled down in a wicker chair, relieved to be alone. Through an interstice of plants he could just see, as in a frame, an alcove formed of palm trees and ferns. It smelt damp and green with a suggestion of decay in the conservatory.

Suddenly two people entered. He could hear the light ripple of a woman's voice and laugh. Then, like a moving picture, two figures passed in front of the plants behind which he was hidden, and as if on purpose, went straight to the alcove framed for his eyes. It was Lucia and the young man, Stanton Gray, at whom she had been smiling a little while ago. She stood tall and willowy in her light amber

tinted gown, silhouetted against the palms. She was still smiling the same illusive smile she had given David when first he saw her at Lake Grove.

Stanton Gray bent nearer to her, picking idly at a feather in her fan.

David was about to rise and join them when something in his wife's face arrested his impulse. Her eyes were narrowed; she had tilted her face at a provocative angle; her long thin fingers played with the edge of her fan. David could not hear what Stanton Gray was saying; nor could he fully see the expression of Lucia's eyes.

The music wailed a rhythmic waltz, that throbbed faintly in deep and minor notes. Then suddenly as Lucia was smiling up at the man, he bent and kissed her. She ducked her head and the kiss landed at the back of her neck.

It was all over in a moment, like the flash of a match being struck.

But quick as it was, David was swifter. He stood before his wife before she could speak again. A fern pot kicked aside by his feet, fell and rolled away.

She gave a tiny cry and stood still, staring at him. The young man squared his shoulders and faced David.

"The worst I've ever heard of you, is that you're a good for nothing idler," began David in a choked low voice. "I ought to kick you like a dog, but I'm not going to touch you, although you've taken a something away from me and her that you can never give back. You've stolen. If I don't knock you

down, it's because of the scandal it would make. Now get out of my way quick."

The boy was very pale, but looked David full in the eyes. "To-morrow then, if you like," he said, bowed and without looking at Lucia walked away.

David turned to his wife. "Come," he said harshly.

"Oh, David!" she whimpered. "He didn't mean anything."

"Never you mind that," he answered in a rough voice.

She followed him without another word, carrying her head high, with a hard little line about her mouth. By pleading a headache to the volubly grieved hostess, she escaped any undue comment, and she and David left the ball.

They drove home in silence. Once she started trying to explain the thing away.

"Hush!" he said.

After that she no longer protested, but sat huddled in the corner of the carriage. David glared out into the night his face stiffened into an iron mask of control. When at last they reached the house, he turned to her. "Go to your room," he ordered.

She stood swaying a little in the dim hall light. Her old rose brocade evening wrap had slipped from one shoulder; her arms and neck gleamed very white and soft. Her eyes looked sad and hurt, as if a great wrong had been done her.

"You're a brute, David," she said. "Stanton Gray is nothing to me. I couldn't know he was go-

ing to try and kiss me, and I would have put him in his place without your help."

She drew her wrap around her and started up the stairs leaving him standing there, dazed and sick, as if someone had struck him on the already sore wound. He no longer understood anything. He did not doubt that she had told him the truth. This man was nothing to her. But then the pitiable vulgarity of the kiss, the small deceit, the waste of it filled his soul with disgust.

"She must be *crazy*," he murmured, and repeated the phrase as if to persuade himself of it. "She must be crazy or vicious."

But of course it was impossible for a woman reared as she had been, loved and protected as she was, to be vicious.

He bowed his head in his hands for shame. Of what stuff was he made not to be angrier, more vengeful! He had forgiven her once for a sin against his faith. Now he faced only a nasty little betrayal, that eluded him when he tried to understand it, and the whole of his poor world tumbled again at his feet in sad broken fragments.

A kiss was a promiscuous gift, small change for young girls and an equivocal promise for a woman. Such a thing was not considered vital; yet the gestures of flirtation often contain the buds of passion.

"Oh, God, is it my fault?" he groaned aloud.

For he loved this woman in spite of the humiliations through which she had dragged him. A tenacious spirit of protection had been born in him also, which was fruit of all the seeds such men as Dan

Sullivan and Father Dunlap had planted in the boy's soul.

Even now he tried to find excuses for her. She was crazy; she was a child; frivolous women like Emily Griggs had influenced her to an inconsequent attitude towards serious things.

All through another night of gall and wormwood he reasoned and struggled with those mysterious questions which had to do with a woman's soul.

The next morning he left the house, without attempting to see Lucia. He had not yet resolved any of these questions.

At the door of his office, he found Stanton Gray waiting for him.

" I must speak to you, Mr. Ghent," he said.

David curtly motioned him in.

The boy looked manly and grave. " Mr. Ghent," he began, " there's hardly anything I can say to you. But I've come anyway to tell you what you must know, that I regret my ill-advised attitude of last night more than I can express. I ask your pardon. But I must say this in my own defense — do you realize that a man doesn't kiss a woman . . . unless he's been a little encouraged? "

David rose from his seat behind the desk and raised his fist.

" You damned cad! " he cried. " Get out of here . . . or I'll smash your face."

" If it would do you any good,— go ahead," said Stanton Gray quietly.

Then when David made no further move he bowed and left the room.

"The cad," muttered David savagely, sinking back into his chair. He had not been able to strike Stanton Gray.

All that day he could not work. His head ached ragingly, his eyes were heavy from lack of sleep. The office seemed to him like a prison, in which he could neither move nor breathe. At last, unable to stand it any longer, he went home.

The maid told him that "Madame" had not been out that day. He stalked up to her room and entered it without knocking. Lucia was lying on the bed. He walked over and stood looking down at her.

"You're like a fruit that has been gnawed by worms," he said.

"David, how can you, when I'm sorry and unhappy!"

"So am I unhappy!"

"You . . . you, thought unkind things. How can I help it if I am pretty . . . and men make love to me."

"I don't know how you can help it. But you've got to behave yourself. I've stood all I can."

"Oh, Davie!" she looked at him helplessly.

"Child, you do not know what you're doing," he said, and left her to walk the streets all that night.

CHAPTER XXII

THE effects of a man's magnanimity to a woman are manifold. If he forgives a betrayal, he is at her mercy, which may mean something sublime and touching. Therein lies the test of womanhood. For his man's wounded vanity is in her keeping. She may let it fester or administer balm. Forgiveness bears the seed of Spring, and is poignant, sensuous, wistful. From it may grow a most beautiful flower flecked with pain, or a crawling furtive weed that cautiously ramps back to the marsh. Again it may prove a barren seed. David Ghent did not understand this thing: that his wife seemed to have no consciousness of wrong, no shame in her soul. So with her forgiveness was sterile.

She flung herself it would seem, more recklessly now into all that was feverish, superficial and sensational. Her manner to David was defiant with a vaguely shown lack of respect. Had he known women better, he would have recognized that the time had come to flog her well, until she whimpered confession of his mastery. But he did not know women and besides, the health of struggle had gone from him. He was weary.

About this time also, his business, like his wife, took advantage of him. He would sit for hours in his office immobile, apathetic, like a sick man or a

sick dog, allowing worries and disasters to accumulate about him, as drifts of leaves against a wall. The results of his former energy now turned upon him. He had bought more copper mines than he could carry, and the value of copper was sinking. The depression of a great coming panic had begun to blacken the financial sky. So it was that obligations, debts, responsibilities, massed into a formidable compact pile, reared steep and dark — a pile he had no will or strength to push away.

Lucia taking no account of such things, flashed from one extravagance to another, spending as only the wife or mistress of a rich man knows how to do. David watched her with dull aching eyes, and at night, instead of lying beside her while she slept, paced the floor, a gaunt tormented spirit, asking himself over and over again how it would end.

Sometimes, when his silence became too heavy, too obvious, she chided him according to her mood.

" David, don't be so glum, or I won't take you out with me." This in the evenings, as they would be hurrying to some social engagement. Then most often he would become irritable.

" Damn it all, if you don't like my humor I'll stay at home."

" Do as you like," she would retort. From there a heavier silence than ever, in which they would drive to the dinner, or to the bridge party, or to some other social gathering, for which David had no taste.

He grew morbid and avoided his friends, lest they should suspect the difficulties in which he was entangled, it seemed more and more hopelessly. Yet he

had only to speak. Jim Griggs could have helped him at once. Other men also would have helped him. For David's word was as good as credit But he imagined that to confide in men meant showing them the complete disillusionment and bitterness of his home life. So he wore the mask that he called his "poker face," and lived alone through dark hours.

There came at last a day when he was obliged to face the situation. All of one afternoon he sat in his office, frowning over accounts; all of this terrible afternoon he covered countless little bits of white paper with small figures, adding, dividing, subtracting. A feverish relentless array of facts emerged from these calculations. He crumpled in his nervous fingers paper after paper and threw it on the floor, beginning over again to reach the same result. He was on the brink of ruin. With everything cleared, he would have left two thousand dollars to his name, nothing less, nothing more.

He sat among the scattered little papers, staring at them drearily. All the struggle of his life was resumed in this shipwreck. Then a great wistfulness filled his heart. The dream of the beautiful woman, of the fair ornament to be worn on his arm, passed away. Above everything now, he craved a companion, a mother-woman, tender and homely of face, beautiful of breast. Homes could be built by two, not by one; he had striven to build alone. His arms fell limply at his sides, for he realized that his home was after all only a cage with the door open. Where at first Lucia had been the reason for success,

she threatened to become the reason for disheartened failure. Such women as she were not for him. Such women indeed, were not the future hopes of the American race, not the broad-shouldered, quietly poised serene workers and mothers who would some day walk beside their men, sustaining and faithful. He thought of Jim Griggs, of other husbands, of himself. They had all chosen young wives and made of them spoilt children. He remembered, with a little smile, what once his future father-in-law had said to him. "We Americans are accustomed to think of our women as being always children. I don't know whether that is wise."

Yet child or not, he was so hungry for love, that he loved Lucia as she was and hoped with the yearning of a dreamer that some day she would grow wise and quiet.

He went home that evening and said to her: "Lucia, there are things I must tell you."

She was sitting in an easy chair, a little stool beside her, littered with her manicure set. She polished her nails until they became like ten little mirrors. David stood watching her. She held lightly the ivory polisher and flashed it to and fro, as if she were playing a mandoline. She wore brocade house slippers and violet silk stockings. He could not help noticing how slim were her ankles.

"Things, Davie, what things?" She did not raise her head but kept on polishing.

"I'm very much worried. We've been living beyond our means," he said slowly.

She looked up at him with a sudden sharp attention

that aged her eyes and mouth, "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I'm broke," he said soberly, staring at all the scissors and files and rouge and powders on the little stool.

She jumped up with a rustle of silken skirts.

"Why, Davie, I don't understand. I thought you were a rich man."

"Well, I was! — And I may be again. But today, I'm down and out."

"How can such a thing be . . . so shockingly sudden?" she cried excitedly. He shrugged his shoulders and made a little hopeless gesture with his hand.

"It isn't sudden, Lucia, I've seen it coming."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Then a faint vague hope that had stayed in his heart, in spite of everything, withered. He looked at her dully, "What was the use? You've never taken an interest in my affairs. You've never even asked me about them. You've just spent all the money I have and more."

She tapped the point of her little brocade slipper on the floor. "The idea!" she said in a low angry voice. "The idea! I spent no more than any of my friends. Besides I thought we could afford to. Well, what are you going to do now?"

He roused himself with an effort. There was a last test for her and for himself, a last chance he could give her to prove herself what a wife should be. He watched her slowly as a sailor watches the sky when there is a storm in the air.

"I can just pay your passage to Paris. You can go and visit your mother there until the bad time blows over . . . if you wish to."

There was a short silence. Then she breathed a sigh that was unfeignedly of relief, and sank back into her chair, her face clearing to a look of decision.

"That is a pleasant idea!" she said. "I didn't dare ask you, but I've been crazy to go and visit Mother for some time. It will be much cheaper too, you know . . . I can save then. We can sub-let the house."

She began to gather her manicuring things and lay them back one by one in the ivory box.

"I thought you would agree with me," said David drearily.

She looked up at him, her blue eyes clear and cold.

"Well, you know, Davie. I do want to be sensible."

There was the faintest trace of sarcasm in his answer.

"In this case, I dare say it's easy for you."

At the same time he tried to persuade himself that she was right to go, that he indeed wished her to go. But he could only grasp one thing — that he was being left alone to face hard times. She came up to him now, conscious as a woman usually is, of the moment to efface an impression of selfishness. "It will be all right, dear," she said, and laid her cheek against his.

He stood stiffly, striving to withstand her nearness. But she was in spite of all things, precious to him. So he bent his head and hid his face in the laces about her neck.

"Girlie, do you still love me?"

She laughed softly and put a hand on his arm.

"Why, Davie — silly boy, of course."

"I love you so," he cried fiercely, and to prove to himself what a child she was, caught and cradled her, as he himself longed to be held — tightly, protectively.

The days sped after that, like sad little ghosts. David accused himself bitterly as a failure. For the man who provides, the man who sows for the woman to reap, the man who has boasted to a woman that he will give her all things tangible, this man cannot afford, even through fault of the woman, to fail her.

Lucia was very sweet; she was too sweet. Under her suddenly capable management, the house was reduced to confusion, sorted out, and returned to order within a short time, ready to sublet. In two weeks her trunks were packed and she was ready to go.

The night before she left San Francisco, at her especial wish, David allowed her to give a little farewell dinner to six friends, among them Emily and Jim Griggs.

David drank hard all that day. By the time the guests arrived, he was decidedly hazy of mind. But he walked correctly enough into the dining-room behind the others. It was amusing he thought with a grim smile, to stand on the brink of ruin and entertain one's friends; to stand on the threshold of the breaking up of a home and entertain as if nothing was happening.

The napery and the silver, in the glow of rose

candle shades, shone suavely. There was a bank of violets in the center of the table. Little pink and white cakes and sweets were heaped in silver dishes around the center piece. There were four kinds of glasses, four kinds of wine.

The women were all in very low cut shimmery gowns. The men all looked prosperous and kind. The tired wrinkles in their faces did not show in this candle light.

Lucia sat at one end of the table and smiled at him across the violets. Emily Griggs sat at his right hand and chattered about Lucia going to Paris.

"Lucky woman! Jim has promised to let me go in April. I go every year, you know."

The pretty woman on his left, Grace Devon, who wore as many jingling bracelets as a savage, sat silently; for someone had once told her that she was prettier when her face was in repose.

Jim Griggs looked over to David once or twice. Towards the end of the dinner, he proposed drinking Lucia's health. Then because David had had several whiskies, a few cocktails and a generous supply of champagne cooking in his head he felt reckless enough and wild enough to rise, holding his glass high and to propose in a carefully clear voice: "Here's to our wives, who leave sinking ships . . . God bless 'em." Ensued a painful instant, bridged over quickly by Jim Griggs, who murmured some conventional toast to which every one could comfortably respond.

David, with a little unsteady smile, drank to the

bottom of his glass, and bowed to Lucia who did not look at him.

Mrs. Dawson, the third woman at the dinner, a well fed, slightly bovine brunette, said something about Paris, someone else answered her and the conversation whirled on.

David sat very straight in his chair, used his knife and fork carefully and made one or two elaborately prepared remarks, to which Emily Griggs, who was evidently much amused over something, answered in her usual pert way.

When at last every one rose from the table, David swayed slightly and his eyes were glassy.

Lucia came up to him under guise of affectionate gesture and whispered disgustedly: "You're drunk!"

"Oh, no'm not," muttered David, righting himself, and tried to put his arm round her. "Best lil wife in the world."

Lucia shook off his arm. "Come, we'll have coffee in the other room," she said turning to the women.

She started out of the door. David tried to follow her and stepped on the snake-tailed train of her blue satin dress. There was an ugly rip. Then she turned upon him, her lips pinched in the familiar straight line, her voice undisguisedly angry.

"David, be careful."

He backed away, murmuring foolish apologies.

Emily Griggs, Grace Devon and Mrs. Dawson passed him, chattering in an absorbed feminine fash-

ion which was obviously assumed. Robert Felton, a mild, weak-eyed young man, and bluff voiced Gregory Dawson stooped to light their cigars over a candle. Jim Griggs came gently up to David and took his arm. David looked at him vaguely. "All thish is da—mn rot!" he said.

"You bet it is," agreed the other man kindly. "Come into the smoking room with me, Dave, and we'll talk it over."

David walked obediently beside him; the two other men following.

But Lucia appeared in the hall.

"Oh, Mr. Dawson and Mr. Felton," she said cheerfully, "want a game?"

They disappeared consentingly with her into the salon, while David and Jim Griggs continued their way to the smoking room.

David sank into a chair and sat staring ahead of him. Jim Griggs smoked on in silence. The room was dimly lighted and warm. A fire burned in the grate and there was an agreeable smell of good tobacco.

After a while, Jim Griggs moving his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other, recrossed his short legs and sat forward. "If at any time you need a friend to help you through a tight place — I'm your man, Davie."

"Thanks; ol' fellow . . . aw'fly good of you," said David brokenly.

Jim Griggs flecked a fat ash from his cigar. "There's bad times coming."

David straightened himself in his chair, and

frowned as if he were trying to tidy up his mind. "They've arrived," he said.

There was a faint flutter at the door, and Lucia entered. She hesitated only a moment, and then came forward slowly, the crown of her wheat colored hair shining against the dull red of the wall.

"Davie, got five dollars about you?"

David fumbled in his pocket, drew out his leather wallet and took from it slowly a roll of bills, thrusting them all in her hand: "Here, old girl!"

"Thank you, I only want five." She counted out the bills and gave him back the rest, then gently drifted away.

Jim Griggs rose and his hand fell affectionately on David's shoulder.

"Women are expensive," he said. "They're all alike. My wife now . . ." his voice droned on.

David felt suddenly sleepy. His head nodded and sank forward on his chest. So Jim Griggs tiptoed back to his chair and sat smoking and staring into the fire.

In this manner the evening passed. David woke with a start, only when Jim Griggs touched him on the shoulder. "Good night, Dave."

"Oh, why . . . what . . ."

"You were tired out and had a winkie. I hear the women in the hall. Guess it's time to be going home."

David touched his bow tie which was slightly awry, passed a hand over his hair, and thus restoring his disheveled appearance, sallied bravely into the hall, for the speeding of his guests.

When every one had gone and Lucia was alone with him, she turned with flashing eyes.

"How could you act so?"

David's face argued innocence. "What did I do?"

"Look at yourself!"

She dragged him to the hall mirror.

Beneath the high light, he saw himself creased and discomposed of face, with a twist of unruly hair standing on the top of his head, and bloodshot eyes.

"Pretty little thing, ain't I?" he said wryly.

"Go to bed," her voice was disdainful. "My train goes at nine in the morning." Whereupon she sailed up the stairs leaving him to follow, steering himself with a hand on the bannisters.

At the door of her room, she paused, all shining in the silk and jewels he had given her.

"Good night, David."

"Can't I come in?"

"No, you can't. I still have some packing to do . . . and anyway, you're not fit to be with me."

So she left him. He trudged down to the room at the end of the hall and fully dressed, flung himself on the bed.

The next morning he awoke, his head feeling like a package of cotton wool; his eyes as if they had been left in boiling water over night.

The day was clear as crystal, with winter shine of sun. From his window he could see the cold blue glisten of the bay.

He dashed ice cold water over his head, dressed

and with a last dull look in the glass at his livid face, went to find his wife.

She was flitting among trunks, pointing at this or that still to be packed. A maid on her knees tucked and smoothed on a top tray the pastel blue satin dress Lucia had worn the night before.

David sidled into the room.

"Morning, Lucia."

"Good morning, David."

He looked around him forlornly.

"Well, it seems as if you were really going," he remarked.

Lucia was folding a flimsy silk wrapper. "Marie, put this in the valise. Have you left out my veil and gloves?" She turned absent-mindedly to David. "I wish you'd see if the express man is there yet, Davie?"

He wheeled about silently and left the room. Soon her friends came, young men and women who greeted him with gay words and smiles, as if this were a day like any other. He sent them to the salon to wait for her.

Then he hung about superintending the removal of the trunks, which mercifully kept him busy until Lucia tripped down in her brown traveling suit, and it was time to go.

At the station there were more friends, who surrounded her with idle smiles and talk. Several young men babbled their intention of joining her in Paris. She stood at the open car window waving and smiling down at them all. David stood inside with her in the compartment, which was a bower

of flowers. A few moments before the train started, she turned to him.

"Well, dear!" she said, "kiss me good-by."

He was conscious of all her friends on the platform, watching as best they could, this leave taking, and turned his back to the window, so that they should not see or divine the wistfulness in his face, as he bent over her. She kissed him sweetly, lifting up her veil to do so.

"Good luck to you, Davie."

"I'll send for you to come back soon," he whispered.

"Good-by, be a good boy."

Then he slid off the train somehow, and stood a little apart from the others, who were waving their hands and shouting last cheerful "Good-bys." The last he saw of her was her face framed in the window. She was holding a bunch of roses, and her eyes smiling down at the group on the platform, were bluer than ever.

Jim Griggs stood beside him. "Come and have a drink, old man." So David allowed himself to be piloted to a nearby barroom.

"My wife's going in March," observed Jim Griggs carelessly, "says she can't stand the early spring months out here."

David gulped down a raw drink of whisky. Then he turned and faced Jim Griggs. "I'm going to take you at your word, Jim," he said. "I need money."

"I thought so," answered Jim. "How much, David?"

"I don't know yet," said David. "But . . . it may be a good deal, Jim."

"Oh, that's all right," said Jim Griggs, "we'll talk about it later. Come over to my office when you know how much you want."

They parted with that handgrip which sends a man each his way, head high, shoulders squared.

David went back to the house alone to pack and leave for an hotel.

CHAPTER XXIII

LUCIA departed, leaving many debts, as lightly as the spoilt child forsakes its nursery cluttered with broken toys, without inquiring who will be responsible for them.

A man rarely knows how much his wife is spending, for if the truth be told, she herself hardly knows where her fantasies are leading her. A vain and pretty woman's bills linger behind her, long after she has passed. They are legion and seem futile ghosts of pleasant and transient effects. But they represent and almost explain how and why she is prettier than God made her. Now it is an interesting enough fact that the man who has surrendered to the art of a skillfully used perfume, a ribbon, a jewel, a small hand in a glove, seldom realizes the value of each of these seductive items, or the price which has been paid for them. The reverent husband has a pathetic moment of revelation, when the gowns, the hats, the flowers, the details in fact which have united to make his wife such a heavenly ornament, prove to be costly and material assets of her charm for which, if he does not pay — who will?

David wished his wife to have "everything" without measuring the word. Now came the reckoning day of what such unlimited trust and credit meant.

In the end he paid all her bills. But to do this

he borrowed money from Jim Griggs, and sublet the house. Whereupon collecting the few modest articles which belonged to him, he was as free to leave San Francisco as if he had never sought to found a home there. Then with not much hope left in his heart or silver in his pocket, he bade his friend Jim Griggs farewell, and went to build another fortune, for he still had a wife to support. So it happened that one day he came to Nevada, as a prodigal son returns home. There in a barren land surrounded by alkali, beneath a freezing sky, Rawhide, a struggling bare looking camp, offered men the essentials of existence, the while they were grappling for luxuries. There then came David, bruised and worn by those luxuries, feeling the call of familiar privation, feeling the old simple joy of rude contact with primitive things, and feeling, like a man with tired eyes, wonder at a sudden vision of so much space and freedom.

Luck had it that he stumbled on old friends. Eddie Mead was in Rawhide to greet him — Eddie who traveled from camp to camp, arriving in time for all the "booms," and sometimes unhappily outstaying them.

Shorty Kendall, the sheriff of Nevada, was also there, a six and a half foot loose-jointed giant, with sloping shoulders, and eyes the color of an Italian lake. These two men welcomed David boisterously, and — this was to their particular credit — asked no questions. They bore him in triumph to the Rawhide hotel, a square shaped place built of boards. David's room possessed a cot, a washstand with rags for towels, a hunk of greasy soap, shiny oilcloth

on the floor, and cheerful chewing gum and cigarette pictures pinned to the wall. Shorty Kendall peered into the room, grunted with satisfaction and with a hearty "see you later" disappeared in the direction of a neighboring saloon.

Eddie Mead lounged on the cot and looked lovingly at David. His warm, "glad to see you, Kid," was balm upon David's troubled spirit. With an unquestionable amount of tact, he did not mention Goldfield or Lucia. David opened his valise and took tenderly therefrom an old soft red shirt and corduroy trousers. When he had donned them and jammed upon his head a battered felt hat, Eddie Mead said: "Come on, Kid. Let's go over to the Metropole. Wouldn't you like to sit in a game?"

"I haven't a red cent to get in any game," said David.

Eddie Mead fished clumsily in his trousers pocket. "That's all right, Dave. Here's my roll. . . . Five hundred bucks for you."

David shook his head. "If I go in and lose I can't pay you, old chap."

Eddie Mead ripped forth a chosen oath. "Blank blank, what are you talking about? You make me tired. I've got a roll that would choke a cow. Get in with it and maybe you'll make a killing."

David put out his hand and said simply, "Thanks, Eddie."

"Oh, that's nothing," replied Eddie Mead, looking annoyed and led the way out of the door.

In the front room of the Metropole was a cigar stand. David bought a box of good cigars, and fitted them luxuriously into his leather case. Already he was feeling like another man. The simple cordiality of the men's greeting had brought energy and hope back to his soul.

In the middle of the low broad building was a reading room with crumpled papers and magazines of antediluvian date, and chairs cracked and hollowed by much use. A roulette table was in the corner. In the adjoining room was an exclusive circle forming a poker club of chosen spirits into which it was not easy to penetrate. Eight long-legged men were sprawling around the table, whisky bottles and tall glasses beside them. They were intent, their broad shoulders drooping, their faces impassive, their powerful hands moving carelessly among colored chips.

Shorty Kendall was there, and looked up to nod absentmindedly at David. There was a Southerner, Edgar Flint, who promoted mines, and had a printing press somewhere, working day and night, turning out dubious stock. It was said that he had options on every uncertain claim in the country, which claims he capitalized all over the State. He was a peevish dangerous fellow, played for big stakes and was nasty when he lost. David had seen him in Goldfield. The other six men were strangers, but Shorty Kendall and Eddie Mead were sponsors enough for any man, and by paying five dollars for his seat, David was at once allowed in the game.

He played until late into the night. When he

rose from the table he had won four thousand dollars. Then he ordered drinks for the crowd, paid Eddie Mead what he owed him and went back to his room, where flinging himself on the narrow cot, he slept unreckoned hours.

In that dreamless sleep and in the days which followed, many sad shriveled things, like useless skins fell from him. He was indeed made whole again. His vision returned, clear-eyed and strong. With it, love for Lucia, as he had first loved her in her guileless blue-eyed girlhood.

Day after day he tramped over the frozen country patiently studying its geology, hunting for what his unerring judgment as an old mining hand, would tell him was a good investment. There were times when his limbs ached with fatigue, when his eyes smarted, when the land seemed cruelly cold and desolate, when the longing for his woman gripped the vitals of him, and his arms felt like an empty cradle. There were other moments when, his back bowed over the poker table, his eyes unbetraying, his mouth impassive, he sat in the crudely lighted room of the Metropole and played through the night, urged by the passion of high stakes.

But in all this there was something fair and free, something of space, of adventure, of life among men that brought health to David's heart. The harmony of an ideal grew from this unfruitful soil. Lucia flowered again, pure, desirable, young — his love. She hovered illusively in his dreams; she flitted before him, beside his weariless quest of earth and of what earth would give.

He wrote to her every other day, trying to picture her in the distant city that was to him, but a name. Paris! what could such a name evoke, in such a wintry land of voluntary exile?

At night sitting in his little room, by the light of a candle, he would take from under his pillow, one of his wife's rare letters. She did not write often. Then from its pages there would steal a magic atmosphere of something strange and far removed from him. He saw her as in a vision drifting delicately from one glittering house to another. He saw rows and rows of shops with vivid things hung in the windows; he saw a restless stream of women flowing and swirling around labyrinths of streets, and heard the crack of whips, the grunt of motor horns; he smelt violets; he saw Lucia lightly hurrying to some engagement, her fine thin silhouette like a long necked svelte bird. So she passed countlessly, with or without a hat, in street dress or ball gown, smiling elusively, or grave, or tired, or displeased or languorous — a thousand women, alternately desirable and unattainably pure. To him, she and Paris were one, mantled in lights and shadows. Mingling with the hurried rush of strangers who wore her face and walked like her, she became the music that streamed from the city in broad rhythmic melody, now hard, now sweet; she became love and pain, she became ideal.

Days passed in slaving and hope and fatigue. But fortune this time did not drop like ripe fruit at his feet. Finally as a last resort he wrote to Henry Lynham who was then in New York.

Now one day while he was sitting at the inevitable poker game, Sam Hall, a big red-faced miner, touched him on the shoulder and begged a word apart with him.

"Mr. Ghent," he said, "I have a lease on Balloon Hill right next to the big Four Lease. The strike of the vein is in my ground, but I can't touch it until I get down some ninety feet."

David had noticed Balloon Hill as being of possible interest. "Well, what can I do for you?" he said quietly.

"I'm out of grub," continued Sam Hall, "I've got four men under me and I can't pay 'em, I need a new hoist and the lease calls for eight shifts a day. Now if you want to cut in with me, Mr. Ghent, we'll go fifty, fifty on it."

He looked at David with soft anxious brown eyes. He was unkempt and there were cup like hollows in his cheeks.

"What'll you do if you strike it?" asked David.

"Thought I'd stock it," said the other man diffidently.

David shook his head. "Nixie! — I don't care for that. If I put up the money and if we strike, I sell."

Sam Hall shifted the weight of his tall gaunt body from one foot to the other.

"Will you put up the money?"

"Let you know to-morrow morning," answered David.

That night he won steadily at poker. Accordingly the next day he sent word to Sam Hall that he

would put up the money for the Balloon Hill lease. But in two weeks funds were short again, and although the vein was unquestionably good, nothing more could be done without more capital.

Meanwhile David received a letter from Lucia asking for an allowance. It was a very sweet letter full of affectionate messages, and the request for money was only a word at the end. But David's face grew grim and dark as he read, for he felt the press of great responsibility. He must answer her letter in a satisfactory way, it was Lucia's right to expect from him an allowance.

About this time, Eddie Mead who had been watching with considerable interest the proceedings on Balloon Hill, said to David:

"Look here, if you and Sam feel like getting rid of that lease, I may be able to manage it for you."

"Go ahead. You can have all you make over five thousand dollars," David told him.

Eddie in a mysteriously short time, sold the mine and David with the ready money bought and sold three other leases, with the happy result that he found himself richer by forty thousand dollars. Whereupon he at once sent a goodly slice of it to his wife in Paris.

A few days afterwards, he received a telegram from Henry Lynham:

"Come at once to New York. Need you. If expenses are necessary wire me."

David did not hesitate and taking friendly leave of the boys, who many of them were sorry to see him go, that same day was off for New York.

CHAPTER XXIV

HENRY LYNHAM sat in his office, looking older about the eyes and crumpled about the mouth, and very steady of hand. So do men who play big games, risking a treasure, be it fortune or a woman, or a good name, look when they are alone — weary of bone and brain, haunted, but still defiant with that large defiance which like a wave in the scoop makes ready to rear itself again to a crest.

The panic of 1907 swooped down over the country like a dire hurricane in which men lost their fortunes and heads. Such things as stocks dropped from anywhere to nowhere. Scandal and fear and ruin stalked abroad; there was squabbling and scrambling to escape them.

Now Henry Lynham was hard pressed, and although he was in good company, many another man being the same, there was no consolation in it.

So there he sat in his office, and brooded over ways and means, until David Ghent, lean with a muscular leanness, keen of eye, and older of heart than he looked, came from Rawhide, bringing with him that same sense of resolution which once before had spoken wisdom to the older man.

Said Henry Lynham bitterly: "I'm all in, David, I've no one to trust, and friends have gone back on me."

Said David: "I guess you've got a few of them left, Mr. Lynham."

Then Henry Lynham, for David's ears alone, uncovered a nasty looking situation, which did not seem to appall the younger man, as it might have done.

There was just one thing that emerged hopefully from all Henry Lynham told David; that was a copper mine in Arizona which was big enough to crush or float any man, should it fail or succeed. But this copper mine had involved Henry Lynham already beyond his limit. It was there, heavy and fruitful; with a gargantuan appetite, and unlimited possibilities. At present it was mainly a gigantic drag on his resources, and a nice stone to drown a man who had founded hopes on it, in a panic.

"Let me think," said David.

He thought for the rest of the day and all the night through. He thought sitting alone in his room in the Waldorf Hotel. The ghosts that drifted about that hotel — ghosts with wheat colored hair and candid blue eyes, the ghosts that stirred like little restless children, for once passed and repassed unseen. Later David would recognize them as beautiful, glad or sad. But now, he could think of nothing except the great problem of how to finance a copper mine in the middle of a panic. He felt at home in such a tussle. Besides which he was sorry for Henry Lynham whom he loved.

After twenty-four hours' of concentration, and some very shrewd figuring, David wrote carefully on a piece of paper, the name of twenty solvable

big men, who could afford to tamper with risks, even on Judgment Day.

Then he went back to Henry Lynham. "You're going to pull through all right," said he with magnificent confidence.

"If we do," answered Henry Lynham, "you won't be the loser, David."

"Now if you need any ready money," said David carelessly, "I've got a bit that's at your disposal."

Whereupon he gave over to Henry Lynham what capital he owned, as simply as Eddie Mead at Rawhide had offered to help him get into a poker game. The principle was the same.

Next he went by appointment to see the first man on his list. This man, Horace B. White, sat back in the kernel of vast affairs. There was much fuss and excitement about seeing him; for he was protected by bristling ranks of men appointed to keep other men away. David was passed upon and handled and frowned at, and discouraged by squads of sentinels, office boys, clerks, secretaries of secretaries and the secretaries themselves, until finally, because the name of David Ghent in business circles had come to be recognized as a name, and because David was obstinate and persuasive, he penetrated behind the closed door, where sat the man he wanted to see.

Horace B. White looked like a dried seed. He was badly dressed and spoke with a twang. But there was a look in his small eyes that was worth the profile of a Napoleon.

His manner was direct. "What can I do for you, Mr. Ghent?" he said.

This was all David wanted. Without fencing or wasting time which to Horace B. White meant literally money, he told him the following about the Lode Stone copper mine: The property, as far as the mine was concerned, was absolutely developed. He, David, guaranteed that on the present basis of copper, as it was then selling in the market at 11 and a half cents, without any further development in the mine, there could be profit on its present ore reserves of ten million dollars. But in order to get this profit, it was necessary to install an immense concentrating plant, for from 3,000 to 4,500 tons per day. Such a plant must be equipped with modern machinery. The ore had been tested in the mill for 200 capacity for a year. Seventy per cent. of assay value could be extracted from it. Now 20 million dollars' worth of ore was blocked out ready for extraction. A tunnel was being driven in three and a half miles long to cut the ore body at a depth of 1,450 feet on incline. Before the panic a 4,500 concentrating plant had been started at the entrance of the tunnel. It was half finished, when the panic swooped down and interfered with further operations.

All this David stated, as limpidly as language would allow. Then his eyes unflinchingly directed towards Horace B. White, he summed up the purpose for which he had come.

"What I want you to do, Mr. White, is to come into a pool and provide the money to complete that

tunnel. You take proportionately so many shares. The moment you and other gentlemen to whom I am carrying this proposition, have subscribed and can tell me how much interest they'll take, the shares of the corporation which you understand are worth ten times what they are to-day, will shoot up sky-high. Of course, once thoroughly financed, the market will be delighted to participate."

Horace B. White sat calmly listening and weighing the figures as indifferently as if instead of representing millions, they were taxed letters, or newly born babies, or tea.

Presently he rose from his desk chair and held out his hand to David.

"I'll think the matter over, Mr. Ghent, and let you know in a few days."

"I hope to hear from you then, Mr. White, as soon as possible. It's a big deal, Sir . . . a very big deal," said David.

The great man smiled courteously. "You can rest assured, Mr. Ghent, that I shall give your proposition careful consideration."

Whereupon David was ushered out and away. Later in the day, he told Henry Lynham: "The thing's going through, I'll bet a coffee bean on it."

"You'll be rich enough to bet much more than that if it does," said Henry Lynham, looking younger than he had done for many months.

Now in the days that followed, David visited the nineteen other men on his list, who, all of them being carefully chosen, listened to him with various degrees of encouraging attention. From not one

did he receive immediate refusal to act in this scheme.

Then there was nothing to do but wait. Every evening he and Henry Lynham dined together at the Waldorf or at Delmonico's and went afterwards to the theater. Every evening they would talk of the same thing, turning and re-turning the affair uppermost in their minds.

They talked of it gravely in whispers, as they sat at some small restaurant table, bending forward so that their heads were close together, and accentuating points with the tips of their fingers. David's optimism buoyed him above all expressions of fear. In his breezy company, Henry Lynham lost his restless look.

But Henry Lynham had acquired a cynicism in life, which the younger man had yet to learn.

"Bluff!" he said to David one evening. "All bluff, my boy, is what goes down here. It's bluff not brains that makes the man of to-day!"

"Perhaps you're right," David answered. "But when there isn't anything behind the bluff and the game's called, then in the show-down, where's your man? He's got to bluff something where there's nothing."

Henry Lynham smiled grimly. "Who's to know?"

David shook his head. "You're only half right. The man who gets there bluffs because he's a wise guy and he don't want to show what he's after; but he's dynamic behind it all. He's got a will that would break the rock of Gibraltar — and I'll tell you

why — because that will's all of a lump — See? He only *wants* one thing. If he wanted five or six, he'd spread and then he'd get nowhere."

"What does he want?" asked Henry Lynham.

David chewed at the end of a cigar, his eyes twinkled in a humorous mood. "Money," he said laconically, and then after a pause, "that's all he's been taught to want — so far."

He looked around him in the softly lighted restaurant. An orchestra was playing, hidden behind some palms; the soft glow gave an impression of show naïvely acknowledged. There was a fragile superficiality enchaining all the men and women sitting at the little tables. Had the restaurant been an instrument it would have seemed tuned half a note too high.

The men and women who came and stared into the room, appeared to be seeking something or somebody and never finding. The discreet clatter of dishes, the silent come and go of the waiters, the feline expression on the face of the head-waiter, the graded ripple of talk all seemed to be hiding restlessness.

David thought how Lucia would enjoy dining in this restaurant, how becomingly she would harmonize with the lights and noise.

"This country of ours has got to live up to its women and its reputation," he remarked quaintly.

"Our reputation has its hand in its pocket where there's always small change," said Henry Lynham. "And our women, David, God bless them, have

their pretty hands on our leather wallets where we keep the bank-notes."

"Oh, well," concluded David philosophically, "that's what they're for."

"The women or the notes?" queried Henry Lynham in a quizzical way.

"Both," retorted David, and dinner being over, rose in a brisk lean-limbed manner as if he had seen enough of the room. "Come on, we'll miss the first act unless we hurry."

These nights the more frivolous theaters were crowded with men in need of reaction, and none laughed more heartily at the jingling songs and coarse humor of the comic opera, than the man who grappled during the day with prospective ruin.

One morning David had good news from Horace B. White, who had investigated the question thoroughly and promised that he would join the pool, to float the Lode Stone mine. His support was the signal of success. In a short time an invulnerable syndicate had been formed.

Then things whizzed.

At that time, the shares of the mine in question, were selling at ninety cents.

When it was announced that the Lode Stone copper mine could pay its debts in about 10 or 15 days, the stock began to soar; in a week the shares were worth 3 dollars. The market was agog. From the day the rumor spread that the mine was financed, the situation for Henry Lynham was saved.

David nursed those shares like a mother her brood.

Henry Lynham had handed over to him a wad of shares in stock, and David reaped.

There came a moment, when gold in his coffers, and hope in his heart, he thought again of life with Lucia his wife; she had been away from him nine months. Her letters, which were always charming, expressed gentle appreciation of the money he was able to send her, and spoke of her life in Paris as a round of social triumphs, and developing experience. She and her mother had taken a delightful apartment near the Bois. But in all this there was no reference to her home-coming. She seemed completely content, completely amenable, completely incurious as to the future.

David, like a schoolboy, longed for a holiday. Prosperity had made him young in spirit again. Then a daring, wonderful idea came to him. He made up his mind to surprise Lucia by going over to Paris and joining her there. They would have a long, delicious, regenerating honeymoon together. He would see Paris, meet her friends, joy in her success, and carry her off alone on a trip somewhere, later. Vaguely he planned that it should be to the Italian lakes or Venice.

He talked over this plan with Henry Lynham, who gave him hearty encouragement, even urged its feasibility.

"American wives in Europe need an occasional glimpse of their husbands to remind them that they are married," he said and slyly winked at David. "Go on, my boy, everything's fine here, we don't need you."

David prepared for this trip like a bridegroom. He made up his mind that Lucia should be proud of him. So he went to the best tailors in New York and ordered clothes, and bought enough gaily colored ties and handkerchiefs and silk socks to stock a shop. He never did things by halves. He bought also a new leather trunk and a valise an Englishman would not have blushed to own. He saw himself dapper and sleek, by the side of his beautiful wife, in the city of pleasure and life.

"I'm being rigged out like a poisoned pup," he told Henry Lynham.

Then suddenly, just a few days before his sailing, he received a letter from his father-in-law who had been in New York staying at the Brevoort Hotel for a week and had just found his address.

"I asked Lucia where you were," ran the little note, "but only received an answer from her yesterday."

David, full of good will towards mankind, and especially towards James Earle whom he had always genuinely liked, made haste to answer this note. He rushed down to the Brevoort, cordial of eye and hand, preparing to greet Lucia's father.

The Brevoort was one of the few places in the busy city which had managed to keep a savor of old New York. Quaintly personal it stood aside, from the shrill pretentious magnificence of modern hotel life. It was indeed a nostalgic fragment of the Paris artists love to know.

As David entered the hall, he heard a snatch of French spoken, which was a language he did not

understand, but it sounded agreeably to his ears. He felt like telling the speaker that he soon would be in Paris.

James Earle came down to the parlor, more gaunt of frame, sadder of face, than ever. David was shocked at the change in him.

"Glad to see you," he said with almost wistful eagerness. "I've been in Denver, but I got kind of lonely and thought I'd run up here for a change."

"It seems good to see you again, Sir," answered David heartily.

"Shall we sit here — or will you come up to my room? I haven't a parlor,"— said Mr. Earle.

"Just as you like, Sir."

"Well, if you'll forgive my room, let's go upstairs."

The room proved to be large and cheerful enough, with a window looking out on Fifth Avenue. A picture of Mrs. Earle was on the bureau; beside it one of Lucia when she was 12 years old. David walked straight up to it.

"She was always a pretty child," said Mr. Earle and sighed.

A childish, ingenuous face smiled at David from the little picture-frame. Lucia wore her hair down then. It must have fallen in sheets of gold over the delicately rounded shoulders. Her tiny hands were folded in her lap. She looked like a sweet, good little girl.

"Well, she's a beauty now," said David.

A silence fell between the two men.

"Have a cigar?" Mr. Earle opened the top

bureau drawer in which everything was laid away in prim order, and took from it a box of Havanas. "I usually keep 'em locked up," he said apologetically.

"How've you been, Sir?" asked David kindly.

The older man shook his head. "Oh, this cough don't seem to get any better. And . . . and perhaps you've guessed, David, I'm a pretty lonely man."

David, who was sitting by the window, rose suddenly.

"Tell you what you ought to do, Mr. Earle," he said. "Come on to Paris with me and see Mrs. Earle and Lucia."

"You're going to Paris?"

"Yes, Sir. I sail Saturday. Now, if you'll let me, I'll . . . I'll fix you up so it won't cost you anything to come with me."

"Does Lucia expect you?" asked Mr. Earle. His back was to David. He was carefully putting away the box of Havanas, and locking the drawer.

"Why no! I wanted to surprise her."

Mr. Earle turned suddenly and fixed David with the weary sunken eyes of an invalid.

"Don't go, then," he said. "Take my advice, David, don't go."

David did not attempt to conceal his surprise.

"Why not, Sir? Lucia's been away now for five months. I've made a lot of money. I'm what they call a rich man to-day. Why shouldn't I go to my wife?"

Mr. Earle wagged his head in a melancholy discouraging manner.

"Lucia isn't the kind that likes surprises. She'd better come home to her own country, instead of your going over to her."

David gave a loud, confident laugh. "Oh, I guess she'll be glad to see me."

Mr. Earle sank slowly into a big chair by the window.

"Of course you'll go anyhow, if you want to. No one ever listens to me. But I tell you again — send for Lucia. Don't go."

"I've set my heart on it," confessed David simply. "Won't you come with me?"

"No, I won't go, Mrs. Earle wouldn't like it, and anyway a sick man's better alone."

David threw his cigar away as if it had no further taste for him.

"Mr. Earle," he said, in a steady low voice. "Is there any reason, to your knowledge, why I shouldn't go to my wife?"

The older man fidgeted in his chair. The expression of his face grew querulous and fatigued.

"Well . . . no," he admitted. "I've letters from time to time from them, but neither of them spoke much about you one way or the other. Knowing my womenfolks as I do, is the main reason."

"That's no reason at all," cried David warmly.

"My wife's a curious woman," continued Mr. Earle as if he were talking aloud to himself. "She's an ambitious woman and one who usually has her

own way. Lucia takes after her. I don't know what they're up to, but they're seeing a lot of fine people, and spending a lot of money . . . and it's a question in my mind where you and I would come in. You're a plain spoken man, David, just as I was at your age, only you've got more health than I had, and more grip."

Then, as if this long speech had tired him, he closed his eyes and leaned back in the chair.

David rose restlessly, and paced the room.

"Maybe you're right, Sir," he said, "but I'm going to see for myself."

James Earle opened his eyes. "I thought you would . . . anyhow," he murmured.

"And now," went on David, sharply forcing unpleasant thoughts from his mind. "I tell you what we'll do. You'll dine with me and we'll go to the theater."

Mr. Earle's face brightened, and then fell to worried discontent.

"I'm afraid I'm not well enough."

"Nonsense," said David briskly. "It'll do you good."

So it was arranged. That evening he devoted himself to amusing the older man and was rewarded by a faint return of joy and life in his father-in-law's manner. James Earle enjoyed the dinner; he enjoyed the play. He grew talkative, almost animated. Not another word was said about David's plans or his sailing. But when the evening came to an end, James Earle turned to him gratefully. "You've given me a mighty nice time, David," he said.

"We'll have more than that," promised David, and was as good as his word.

He devoted his remaining days to the sick man. He took him everywhere, introduced him to Henry Lynham, and other men, dined and wined him, and drove him out to the park in the afternoons. In fact by many of the smaller delicate kindnesses with which one man may mother another weaker man, made James Earle's stay in New York a very happy one.

But at last came the day when David was to sail; when he had to bid his father-in-law good-by.

"Take care of yourself, Sir. When Lucia and I come back, you must visit us," he said, and all the hope and warmth in his heart crept into his voice.

"Thank you . . . thank you, David," answered James Earle simply. "You've been very kind to a poor old invalid. I hope you'll have a good time."

"Sure," said David to him.

"Give Sarah my love — and Lucia."

"Sorry you won't come along, Sir."

"Not now, David . . . I'm not up to it." They exchanged a friendly handclasp. David said good-by with an unusual hoarseness in his voice. Mr. Earle was not coming down to the deck to see him off, but as the older man stood on the steps of the hotel, a tall, lank, stoop-shouldered figure, his sad old face twisted in a wistful smile, and waved good-by, David felt that it was for the last time. He never expected to see him again.

The next morning, David stood on the deck of

the *Wilhelm der Grosse,* and watched the blur of faces on the wharf grow dimmer.

Henry Lynham who had come to see him off fused in the crowd and was lost, with none of that weeping and waving of handkerchiefs that attends a more sentimental parting.

Now, as the great ship plodded out from the harbor, as the jagged skyline of buildings dwindled and faded, as the Goddess of Liberty, erect, symbolical, was passed and left behind, and the band played a merry tune and the first class passenger-world settled down to days of lazing and gossip, David thanked his God that he was alive.

It was good to take a holiday, it was good to have earned the right to that holiday.

The sea, the horizon, the sky, were full of Lucia. He went towards her as to a promised land.

CHAPTER XXV

IT seemed to David as if he were winging straight to happiness, as if indeed his life had driven through periods of pain and loneliness, to this one holiday, where the benefits of patience and will lay ripe for the harvest.

Like a child now, patching together the parts of a puzzle, he constructed in mind's eye pictures of himself and Lucia, united, reveling in cities and countries that he for one had never seen, so could only imagine. He would give her a good time. He had plenty of money, the determination to spend it, and an ardent desire to see, to appreciate, and to learn that which was worth while. He wanted, in fact, to educate himself for Lucia's sake.

"You see, Ma'am, it's this way," he told a motherly old lady from Boston, with whom he made friends on the ship. "My wife's a beautiful woman. She's had advantages of culture and so on. I'm only a plain speaking man. Why, I've never even been to school! But now I've got my little pile, I'm going to begin to improve myself. What do you think of that?"

"I think you're wise," said the motherly old lady who had, by the way, a very sweet sad smile, and eyes that reminded David of his grandmother Arnold. "I suppose your wife takes an interest in

art and beautiful things, which she would like to share with you."

"Well, ma'am, she's never talked with me about anything like that. But I'd like to travel with her and see all these countries people talk about. And I'd like to speak French and read books and kind of get into the game, so that she'll be proud of me."

"I'm sure she must be proud of you now," remarked the old lady gently.

She was lying back in her steamer-chair at the time, with only one thinly stuffed little cushion for her head and one rug for her rheumatic old knees. She shivered ever so slightly. David noticing the shiver, sprang from his chair, gave her his own cushion, a large rotund affair, and his two plaids, tucking her in them until she looked like a withered mummie.

"Oh, no . . . Oh, thank you. I was quite comfortable," she protested weakly.

"If I had a mother, she'd be treated to the best of everything," answered David standing at the foot of her chair and looking at her with satisfaction. "This trip you're going to be my Mamma, so you've got to let me do for you."

The old lady wiped a furtive tear from her faded blue eyes. "I suspect you're always taking care of people," she said. "I have not been waited on for these many years."

"Oh, that's all right, mammy."

The boat would not go fast enough. David divided his time cuddling and fussing over the old lady, as if indeed she had been his mother, and pac-

ing the deck, thinking the while of Lucia. He thought that perhaps he had lived too much among men; perhaps he was too rough of mind and manner for such a gentle creature. It was a fine thing to be the husband of a beautiful young woman, to have the right to work for her, and walk beside her, labeled as her rightful protector. Now that he had more time, now that the Ohio copper mine was dropping a snug fortune into his pockets he could strive better to understand Lucia, to share with her the life she chose to lead.

As he leaned against the ship's railing, and watched the coil and billow of waves, the play of foam upon the surface of the traitorously blue sea, and the thin wavering thread that was the horizon line, he thought frequently, within a loyal corner of his soul, that he had done well to forgive many things. He also had been to blame; for no man should judge the weakness of women who are left too much alone.

Through long nights, lying in his narrow bunk, another dim and fragile dream slipped bravely to join a secret company. Some day, suggested the dream, there might be another David . . . his son, a sturdy lad with Lucia's candid eyes. Then alone in his cabin, with the lunge and roll of the ship, and the creak of beams accentuating the steady passage forward through the dark night-clad sea, David planned how his boy should be educated and cared for, and given opportunities he had never known. The father-look stole into his face.

The old lady, of all the idle matter-of-fact, bustling passengers, was the only one to see the wistful light

in David's gray eyes. Just as he, of all the careless, loud-voiced poker playing masculine contingency on the ship, was the only one to realize or care that the old lady was lonely and poor. He noticed that her neat black dress had a rusty look, the few flowers in her bonnet were faded by the sun and rain of many seasons, and once when a salt wave leaped over the deck railing and drenched a black veil of hers, he distinctly saw a distressed expression in her mild old face.

She told him that she was going to Munich to join her dead brother's daughter who was studying something or other there. She was to chaperone and keep house for this girl, as an art career and domestic responsibilities were not compatible. She confided to David that she was terrified at the prospect of living and probably dying in Munich. She did not speak German and knew nothing of German markets or servants. Moreover, although she was cautiously loyal in her accounts of what awaited her, it was easy to infer that she rather feared her dead brother's daughter who seemed a vague, temperamental young thing, with the unconscious selfishness of her type.

" It's my duty," confided this dear old lady to David. " The child can't live alone. My brother left me a little money to pay for the voyage, and I have a bit laid by, if Alice should ever need anything. . . . But my! it was hard to leave home." Her little sigh, and the far-away nostalgic look in her eyes were eloquent. It was to be feared that her niece would not appreciate the sacrifice.

The day before the ship arrived in Boulogne, David slipped a hundred-dollar bill into an envelope, wrote in a boyish unformed hand: "For Mamma from her loving son," and sent it by the stewardess to the old lady. He thought she could buy with it a bonnet or a shawl or a brooch.

The stewardess returned with the request that he go to her cabin. He found her sitting there, a crumpled pathetic figure, holding the envelope in trembling hands.

"My dear boy . . . you must take this back," she quavered.

David went straight up to her, and put his arms around her. "Now, Mamma, listen to me. I've adopted you. It gives me pleasure. You've got a birthday coming some time, haven't you? Anyway there's Christmas in seven months. I guess I've got a right to give you a Christmas present."

"Oh, dear me!" sniffled the old lady, holding a handkerchief to her eyes. "Nobody's ever been so kind."

David patted her on the shoulder. "You go buy yourself something pretty," he said, and left her, smiling through her tears.

That evening he treated her to champagne, and they two drank Lucia's health.

The morning of his arrival in Boulogne, he lugged from his steamer trunk, a new suit, a tie, a handkerchief and socks to match, and donned them with boyish pleasure. The suit was brown, and David was sure Lucia who liked well-dressed men, would approve of it. It was a beautiful weave of Scotch

cloth. The coat and trousers were amply cut and fell in loose straight line from his figure.

The old lady told him that it was a very handsome suit. "You look grand!" she said, nodding her head wisely. Whereupon David beamed and strutted just a little.

That morning he sent a Marconi message to Lucia.

"Gee! she'll be surprised," he told the old lady, and chuckled at the pleasant thought of how surprised she would be.

The shores of France came gently into view, warm and sunny in the spring shine. David gazed at them with the ardent curiosity of a traveler entering the promised country. Beyond the shore line lay happy days for him.

A little boat fussed importantly up to the side of the steamer and took away passengers for Boulogne. The old lady who was going on to Bremen, tearfully kissed David good-by and said "God bless you," many times.

She insisted upon his accepting a tiny worn, gold locket, which once had held the picture of a brave young man whom she had loved. "He died in the Civil War, and the picture faded," she told David.

He put the locket on his watch-chain and hugged the old lady heartily. She leaned against the rail waving and waving to him as the little boat tugged away from the big one.

"Good-by, Mamma," he shouted, and tossed his hat in the air, at which smug people with bristling

heaps of luggage standing near him smiled tolerantly and raised their eyebrows.

When his voice could no longer reach her, he turned away from sight of the great ship looming out of the sea, and looked towards France and Lucia.

On the quay, he was bewildered by the jabber and agitated gestures of French porters. "Hold on! . . . Go slow," he told them in English, as they seized his valise, his bundle of rugs, all but himself. By dint of pantomime and liberal tipping he found himself at last settled on the train.

Then, like an eager child, he stared out of the car window at the blossoming country which flashed past, thinly veiled by a twilight mist. No one in the compartment paid any attention to him. The other people dug their noses in illustrated papers and books. He had as traveling companions a supercilious lady, her husband, and an asthmatic old gentleman.

David, sitting in his corner, took out his watch every other moment, consulted it, and turned again to the window. As the hour drew near when the train was due in Paris, he could hardly restrain his impatience. Little pulses began to beat in his head and around his heart. His eyes had grown bright, clear and brave. He felt like a schoolboy before vacation, like a lover before a tryst, like a traveler reaching home. He thought of Lucia as he had seen her the first time in Lake Grove, young and proud and beautiful. How she trod like a queen among other women!

From blue shadows the lights of Paris sprang magically, a myriad of orange stars. The city of

dreams; of love, of hope, unfolded its irregular roof-lines from afar;— took form and life, offered itself to David's marveling gaze. The long tunnel shaped station seemed to slide up to the train. At once a jostling, running army of porters surged below the car windows, stretching brawny arms and shoulders to receive the bags and parcels handed down to them. Passengers streamed forth and away, faces seen once, probably never more. David jumped lightly onto the platform, and looked around, straining, expectant eyes for sight of Lucia. He was a-tingle, alert, exuberant.

Swaying like a tall slender reed, she came towards him down the long platform, threading her way carefully among a flux of travelers. She wore a big fawn colored hat, with a back aigrette in it, and a tan tailor suit, that molded her slight figure. People turned to stare after her.

"Lucia!" cried David. "Lucia!" and ran to meet her.

Her smile was cool and tranquil. It fell upon David like the faint ray of a winter sun.

"You *have* given us a surprise!" was her greeting.

When David bent to fold her in his arms, regardless of all things, of all eyes, she evaded his embrace so gently that she seemed to slide away from him, and turn the cool pink of a cheek to be kissed.

Then without knowing why, without reasoning, David felt suddenly stripped of joy.

"Has the porter taken your bags?" she looked over his shoulder at the hurrying throng.

"Yes . . . Lucia, sweetheart, aren't you glad to see me?"

He strove for a returning ring to his voice, for the leap of exultation in his heart.

She walked quietly beside him. "Of course, I am, dear. But it was so sudden, wasn't it? I would have liked to have known before, so that I could have made better arrangements for you."

"But you don't need to make arrangements for me, Lucia."

"Well, we'll talk of that later. Give me the key of your trunk, you have to pass the customs, you know."

He gave her all she asked for, and stood back, suddenly dumb and helpless, while she, in a brisk capable way, ordered the porters about and passed his trunk through the customs.

"I didn't know you spoke French so well," he murmured once; and again: "It seems funny for you to be taking care of these things instead of me."

"Oh, it's natural," she said carelessly.

At last they were in a taxi-motor, edging away into the glitter and chaos of the streets.

"Sweetheart, I'd thought you'd be glad to see me," he said and all the love, the longing, the hopes of the past seven days, of the past months, throbbed in his voice.

She put a gloved hand on his knee, and looked at him with baffling blue eyes. "Of course, I am, David dear, don't be silly but you see . . ." she hesitated the fraction of a second, then continued firmly. "You see we have a small apartment, really only big

enough for two. Mother isn't well these days. It's very hard, impossible in fact, to put you up there."

He sat still and rigid, listening to her. A perfume of violets drifted from her hair, and filled the closed carriage with subtle fragrance.

He roused himself then. "Why, where am I going, Lucia?"

She gazed out of the window, as she answered: "To a hotel. It's right near us, you know, David. You'll be much more comfortable there."

"I don't understand," he said blankly. "You've changed! You're not the same to me. What is it, Lucia, what does it all mean?"

She raised her eyebrows in a delicate way, and met the anxious, earnest look in his eyes.

"Nothing, Davie . . . please don't imagine things. We must try to do the best we can for mother, that's all. You see we didn't really expect you."

"Or want me, evidently," he muttered. It seemed to him as if the unfamiliar streets they were passing, were nothing but evil dreams, as if the lights were dull, the city noises muffled.

He struggled against disappointment that was so profound that it became despair.

"David darling! Don't take it this way. It isn't fair to me," she said. "It . . . it's going to be lovely having you here." She put her hand on his arm.

"Oh, Lucia!" he cried, "my girl!" and crushed her in his arms, burying his face in the scented ruffles of lace that fell from her neck. She let him

have his way. The motor slid noiselessly up the Champs Élysées and stopped at the side entrance of a hotel.

"Here we are," she said, quickly disengaging herself from his arms. "I telephoned for a good room for you. You're sure to be comfortable."

"All right, dearie." He had found comfort in holding her for so little time, and his voice was resigned.

She went up with him to his room, the liveried servants, the porters, the machinery of the big hotel paving an easy way for them. Then when the door of the room closed, and he and she were left alone, he went again to draw her in his arms. This too, she suffered.

"Take off that veil, sweetheart."

"Oh, it's all pinned and tied, I'll lift it up."

"Take off your gloves and coat. My, how beautiful you look!" he stepped away from her, better to look at her. Ardor and joy rushed back to his soul. She smiled and seemed to grow more tender of eyes and voice.

They passed a short happy while together. Suddenly she took out a little jeweled watch and glanced at it.

"Gracious! I must go, Davy."

"What? . . . Why? . . . What, go?" he exclaimed. He had been telling her all about his trip, about the old lady, about a thousand and one impressions and happenings he had saved up to bring to her. She rose from the chair by the window,

where she had been sitting, listening to him, and began drawing on her gloves.

"Yes, dear, I'm so sorry." There was some regret in her voice. "But you see I made an engagement long ago for a very big dinner to-night at the Pré Catelan. I received your word too late to get out of it. Mrs. Caulder would never forgive me especially as the dinner is being given for me. I must go."

"Aren't we going to have *dinner* together?"

She buttoned her gloves, and standing before the mirror, adjusted her veil.

"Not to-night, dear. I would have asked to bring you, but I didn't suppose you'd want to hurry into dress clothes the very first night and meet a lot of strangers."

"You bet I wouldn't have!" exclaimed David. "Only Lucia, I didn't think you'd leave me this way, the very first evening. What will Mrs. What's her name think when she hears your husband is in Paris, and not with you?"

"I'm going to tell people you're arriving to-morrow morning," she said calmly, and turning from the mirror came towards him smiling. "It would have been awkward, Davy."

The dull ache of the first moment at the station, the dazed feeling of hurt and cold swept back to him now.

"What shall I do with myself?" he said drearily.

She came close to him and put her arms around

his neck, with a sudden feline movement of shoulder against his shoulder.

"You'll be a good boy and forgive me," she whispered.

The violet perfume drifted sweetly from her hair and lace ruffle, enveloping him, weakening his will. He kissed her and held her again a moment. Then she smiled, murmured "A demain" in French, and was gone.

It seemed monstrous, incredible, that he should be left alone, this first night in Paris.

A trace of her violet perfume lingered in the room, faint, disquieting. He sank into a chair by the window and buried his face in his hands.

There was no one conscious thought in his mind. — Only a blur of trouble and somber presentiment. He had not even the heart to be angry. He had never really been able to be angry with Lucia, but now such a sense of loneliness descended upon him that like a great wave it drenched him to the marrow, overwhelmingly. He yearned for her to come back, to prove everything a nightmare. What was the promise of a social engagement weighed against the coming of some loved one.

Below his open windows Paris hummed her night song, seductive, nostalgic.

David rose and went wearily to stand in the window and stare down at the dusky blur of chestnut trees. The strangeness of the city, the mystery of it, cloaked by night, drifted up to him. He was lost in it without a guiding hand.

CHAPTER XXVI

DAVID dined alone that evening, dreary-hearted, bewildered and sore of soul. He did not yet understand what had come to him. It was as if he were living suddenly in a nebulous dream. If Lucia, his wife, had stabbed him with a dagger she could not have left him more helpless and sick than she had done by the sweet aloofness of her eyes, her careless voice, above all her unwarrantable abandonment of him in this strange hotel, the night of his arrival. He had planned for and lingered so fondly over thought of this first evening!

He never afterwards could remember how he found his way down to the dining-room, or what he ate for dinner, or what the people looked like who sat around him. They glittered as if through a haze; their prattle drifted and knocked against a wall of loneliness. He moved mechanically past them, a dull spot in the brilliant crowd of white fronted men and softly gowned women.

Once he smiled grimly to himself at a sudden image of the old Boston lady, and something she had said: "I'll think of you Friday, dining with your beautiful wife. I wish I could see you both together."

If the old lady from Boston could only know the truth.

After he had finished his dinner, he wandered vaguely into the big hotel hall. A porter loitered near the door. Sudden dread of spending the rest of the evening alone in his room came upon David. He went up to this porter.

"What is there to do in this town?" he asked.

The man measured him and then smiled confidentially.

"If Monsieur desires company . . ."

"None of that," answered David almost rudely.

The man's manner changed at once. A mask of impenetrable civility froze the leer from his face.

"There are the theatres, Monsieur."

David shrugged his shoulders wearily. "I don't understand French."

"Then," suggested the man respectfully, "there is a café near here. Monsieur might have his coffee there . . . or on the boulevards."

"Where did you say the place was I could have coffee?"

The porter beckoned to a precocious-looking bell-boy. "Take Monsieur to Fouquet's," he said.

"Well, you're a tiny specimen to be leading me around," remarked David dryly to the child, who in miniature uniform of servitude only smiled at him with wise old eyes, and led the way swiftly out of the hotel.

"Don't speak English, do you?" observed David.

The peaked mite shook his head.

"Oh, very well," and without further attempts at conversation David followed his guide.

The night was scented and warm, even a little

sultry. From Fouquet's bar, out upon the terrace sprawled tables at which sat men and women.

David fumbled in his pocket, fingering a handful of French coins. "I'm blest if I know what these things are," he murmured. "Anyway here's a piece of silver for you, son."

He handed the boy a franc, whereupon the child smiled, touched his cap and trotted away.

Then David settled at an empty table on the fringe of light which streamed from the café and ordered his coffee. Looking around him, he became suddenly conscious of the women. They sat at neighboring tables alone or together, or with men. They glided discreetly among shadows, or flung themselves crudely in the rays of white lights. There was a constant rustle and perfume of their passage. An avid suspicious glimmer shone in their eyes circled with black. They smiled with a mechanical up-drawing of scarlet lips that looked like red flowers. They were old and young, thin and fat. They were bold and shy, feline, equivocal and furtive.

It seemed to David suddenly as if he were suffocating in the midst of the febrile suggestive atmosphere of these women. To escape them he looked at the men, who came and went insolently, or lounged at the little tables staring and appraising passing women.

A tall young creature with yellow hair and blue eyes brushed by impulsively. She, too, seemed to be seeking someone or something. Suddenly she glanced down and saw David. She bent over him,

smiling. But her smile only made him realize she had bad teeth. The perfume she wore drifted about her insinuatingly.

"Monsieur is alone?" she murmured in halting English.

A swift disgust for her and her sisters raged unreasonably in his tired eyes. He looked from her without answering.

She exclaimed something in French, shrugged her shoulders softly and swayed away. He watched her go, listlessly. The line of her shoulder and waist reminded him of Lucia. He hated to be reminded of Lucia in this place.

With a sudden fierce gesture, he rose from the table, threw down a piece of silver that rattled against a saucer, and moved away, towering for a moment above the squatting groups on the terrace. Then he reached the street and shadows engulfed him.

Up the avenue, between the rows of chestnut trees, rolled silently swift motors in which lolled gaily colored beings who looked unreal. Carriages crawled along like sluggish insects. The night was languorous; small stars teemed in a soft sky; the pale, fragile amber moon floated like a ghost seeking joy.

David stood under the trees, breathing their subtle aroma. An open, empty carriage rolled slowly by. An old coachman huddled on his seat, reins slack, left the tired animal to choose his pace.

David stepped forward and whistled. Like a passing bark at signal from a traveler, the horse stopped and David climbed into the carriage, waving to the coachman to go where he wished.

The mystery of this strange city on a Spring night settled upon him like a cloak and hood, from which he could look, unmolested in his bitterness. He thought he had never been so completely deserted. But gradually as the rickety carriage trundled on he fell into a gentle brooding resignation.

There was romance drifting around him in every pore of the night. Hidden things whispered to the eternal youth of lovers. The carriages that passed all seemed to hold couples interlaced, floating away to some promised paradise. The Arc de Triomphe loomed heroically against the sky. The Bois merged from it in a road that was smooth and long.

The old coachman swayed half asleep on his box.

Then unutterable yearning filled David's soul and he asked himself why he had come. Great eyes of burning automobiles devoured the dark, droned by with a beating of steady pulse and were gone. In and out among the shadows drifted lovers. Youth and desire walked close together, unashamed.

David felt deserted, old and forgotten. Where was Lucia in all this enchanting night?

The old coachman, without a word, had turned his horse, and they were going back from whence they had come; passing the Arc de Triomphe, lounging down the avenue. They went close to the curb where horse and driver might slope along in safety.

A gaunt woman, slinking among the trees, stepped forward as they passed and accosted David. He drew out some coin from his pocket and flung it at her. She shrieked an insult at him and fell on her knees, scrambling in the dark for the money. But

he did not even turn around. The lights of his hotel flared insolently in view. He tugged at the dozing coachman's arm and pointed to where he wished to stop.

He was in his room at last, alone. From the open window came the stir of night sounds. Below among the trees stalked couples arm in arm.

The night wended its intangible way to dawn, and David sat sleeplessly at his window, watching the moon whiten.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE next morning he received a note from his wife, inviting him to lunch. "Anybody would think she'd met me at a tea-fight and I'd left my card," he reflected with considerable bitterness of spirit.

He dressed carefully, however, for the occasion, but without inspiration. His tie, a betraying feature of elegance in a man, instead of looking like a gay-winged butterfly hovering under his chin, was more like a sober-toned moth. His handkerchief, brown silk to match the tie, dug down in his pocket, where it should have flopped an attentive ear over the pocket-edge. He had, indeed, not yet learned the secret of impertinence of dress and insolence of manner in his dealing with pretty women.

By the time he came downstairs, the spacious hotel had started its day of colorful activity. There was a brisk, well-oiled movement in the hall and elevators, a polite meeting of polite strangers hurrying by, each and all bound on morning excursions to the Bois, to the shops or to the boulevards.

For there is no class of people more regular of habit than those who have nothing in particular to do. David seemed an alien among these sleek beings, as he strode past them, gray of face from his sleepless night.

He drove to his wife's apartment in the rue Washington. The entrance of the house was imposing and guarded by a short, shriveled-looking old concierge, who opened her door to a crack, and peered at David with some suspicion, as ignorant of the institution of such watch-dogs, he passed her "loge" without explaining his business.

"What do you want, Monsieur?"

Supposing a question from her intonation, David smiled somewhat grimly and pronounced the name of his wife. Whereupon the old creature trotted grudgingly after him to a toy elevator mumbling explanations. David ironically waved his hand to her, as the tiny cage, obedient to her manœuvring, shot up to the third floor.

The door of the apartment was large and white; a wide mirror ornamented the side wall. David stared into the mirror with some curiosity.

"You're a great geek!" he said to himself as with a careful finger he touched the polished little door bell.

A young woman, with big dark eyes, a straight fringe of black hair hiding her forehead and a full-lipped mouth, clad in an immaculate cap and apron, came to the door, staring at David with considerable interest.

"Madame Ghent?" he asked, nodding his head to her pleasantly.

She smiled in a friendly way, and answered in good English: "Yes, it is here!"

"Say, I like her!" was his inward comment, as she deftly helped him off with his overcoat, and he

slipped a generous piece of silver in her discreet hand.

"What's your name?"

"Céline, Monsieur."

"Seeline! Sounds like a tooth-wash," he remarked, looking about the hall, and added quizzically: "No wreath with welcome on it, and no brass band for me here, Seeline."

"Yes, Monsieur," she murmured politely.

There was a silver platter heaped with cards on a carved wooden chest. Closed doors painted white, with little square panes of glass and lace curtains, shut away the rest of the apartment.

Céline opened one of these doors, and ushered him into the parlor, a large white and gold room with old rose rugs and curtains. There was in the corner a grand piano covered with a piece of gold brocade. A tall vase stood on it, containing long stemmed red roses. There were other vases filled stiffly with costly flowers. David caught an impression of much white and gold furniture, and of many silver frames in which were photographs of people he did not know. His hands in his pockets, he wandered about the room as a stranger, bending now and again to look at some object which interested him. There was one photograph especially at which he stared for a few moments, perhaps because it was the only one of a man in the room, perhaps because David instinctively did not like the man's face. It was a long, weary face, dryly cut of feature, with vague signs of dissipation around the eyes and mouth. The hair was brushed back from a high

forehead. The shoulders were narrow, the wrists small, the hand long and thin of fingers. Across the bottom of this photograph was written with a bold free flourish, "Admiring homage, Ludwig von Lenze." When David had examined everything in a room, most of whose contents he had paid for, he began to think decidedly that it was absurd to be kept so long waiting for his wife. Just then the door opened and Mrs. Earle entered quietly.

"Well, David," was her greeting, "you *have* given us a surprise."

"Hello, Mamma! That's what I've already been told," said David, and, coming forward, kissed her affectionately enough. "Let me look at you. You don't look sick."

Mrs. Earle did not indeed seem ill. Her hair was carefully waved and done in a new way; there was a faint pink tinge on her cheeks; she was perhaps less stout than when he had last seen her, but her black taffeta gown fitted her with a clever toning down of waist and hips.

"I'm far from well," she said, sudden vague complaint in her voice. "Won't you sit down, David?"

"Where's Lucia?"

"She hasn't come home yet from the Bois."

"The Bois?"

"Yes, the Park," explained Mrs. Earle, settling herself comfortably in an armchair. "Everybody walks there in the morning."

"They do! I'll have to catch on to that," observed David dryly.

Mrs. Earle smoothed the dull silk of her skirt with slow, idle fingers.

"Yes, indeed!" she responded without enthusiasm.

David's eyes roved around the room.

"You're nicely fixed here," said he.

"Yes, but it's too small," answered Mrs. Earle promptly.

"Of course we were sorry not to be able to put you up, David, but there's really no place for a man here. Lucia has been far from well."

"Lucia! Why, she didn't tell me that. I thought you were the one."

"She wouldn't want to worry you," said Mrs. Earle quickly. "We've both been tired out. . . ."

David leaned forward with sudden decision. "What's it all mean, Mamma?"

"What does what mean?" Mrs. Earle repeated the question with a vague look of surprise.

David rose impulsively from his chair, and turned to his mother-in-law.

"You and Lucia act so strangely. I don't feel as if you were treating me right," he said.

Mrs. Earle rose also now and faced him.

"I'm sure, David, I don't know what you're talking about."

David brought his fist down on a little gilt table littered with porcelain boxes.

"I guess you do, Mamma," he said. "And this thing is going to be cleared up right away quick, too. Have I done anything wrong?"

Mrs. Earle appeared to be thinking hard. When

at last she spoke her voice was careful and slow. She looked away from David, and walking over to the door which was slightly ajar, closed it.

"Since you insist, David, I repeat that there is really nothing. Only Lucia is very young . . . and you haven't been with her much since your marriage. Oh, I know . . ." she continued as David made a motion to interrupt her. "It hasn't been your fault. But she has never been really . . . well, accustomed to you as a husband. You must give her time."

David laughed dryly.

"Not accustomed to me as a husband! That's a good one."

"She's highly strung and nervous," pursued her mother. "You must be patient with her, David."

David walked to the piano, restlessly, and stared at the photograph of the dissipated-looking man. "It isn't fair somehow," he said.

Mrs. Earle moved over to him and put her hand ingratiatingly on his arm. "Think for yourself, David. You stay in America, and she in Paris for months; suddenly one day, without warning, you appear, and expect her to be just the same. No woman could be."

"It seems a pity," said David slowly. "It seems a pity that she doesn't understand that I've been working for her in America."

"Of course she understands," murmured Mrs. Earle.

"Well, there isn't any change in me, is there?" cried David, and all the hurt and disappointment stored up since his arrival was in his voice. "No,

I tell you what it is . . . I'm not wanted. Lucia and you have no use for me here."

"Indeed we have, David," said Mrs. Earle. "Don't be so hasty, I beg of you."

Just then a bell whirred. There were steps in the hall and light whispers. The door opened and Lucia glided into the room followed by an exceedingly pretty woman. Both were in crisply cut tailored suits, with close fitting hats and thick lace veils.

"Oh, David!" exclaimed Lucia, and moving over to him, she kissed him lightly on the cheek. A smell of violets clung about her, and her lips were soft and cool. Then she turned to the pretty woman who was shaking hands with Mrs. Earle. "Marian, may I present my husband? . . . David, dear, Mrs. White is a great friend of mine."

"Glad to meet you," said David, and took the limp gloved hand in a strong clasp.

"Have you been here long?" murmured Lucia. "I thought you'd want a rest this morning, or I would have run in to see you."

"Too bad you didn't," said David and looking at her, could not help thinking how beautiful she was. She stood in front of the mirror taking off her hat and veil, fluffing at her soft hair with light, skillful fingers.

"Is luncheon ready, mother? We're half starved. Everybody was in the Bois this morning. Want a cocktail, Marian?"

Mrs. White lifted her veil over the tip of her nose, and began to unbutton her tan suède gloves. "Not for me," she answered gayly.

"David?"

"I'd like one," he said.

Mrs. Earle rustled unobtrusively out of the room.

"Excuse me then, will you, while I go and make it." Lucia smiled at David and drifted away after her mother, leaving him with Mrs. White.

"So you're one of the rare Americans who take holidays?" remarked that vivacious lady, looking at him from beneath delicately penciled lashes.

"Well, I guess I need it," answered David.

She laughed pleasantly with a little shrug of her shoulders. "But that's no reason. My husband, now, hasn't taken a day off for three years."

"You're not Horace B. White's wife, by chance?" asked David with sudden eagerness.

"Why, yes."

"I know him well. He's a fine man." David's voice rang cordially.

"Poor Horrie! That's what all men say. Women never like him," said his wife carelessly.

David thought of the day he had gone to Horace B. White with the Ohio Copper Mine proposition. So this was his wife!

Just then Lucia came back, with Céline carrying the tray upon which were three cocktails.

"I made one for you anyway. I knew you'd want it," she said to Marian White who smilingly yielded to the temptation.

Luncheon was served. Céline waited on the table.

"She's my maid," whispered Lucia in reply to

David's question. "The man left yesterday, and she consented to help us out."

"So you have a man," said David with obvious and labored politeness. He felt as if he were talking to a stranger.

"We couldn't get along otherwise," she answered absentmindedly.

During the rest of the meal, he was conscious of being out of place among these three women. Lucia often smiled at him across the table; but the talk veered quickly to people and things unfamiliar to them.

Mrs. Horace B. White possessed a brilliant wit that turned to ridicule everyone it touched,— and it touched everyone. Silently observant, David heard most of the American colony, in Paris, and some foreigners, rapidly passed in caricatured review by the three women. He listened with resigned patience to accounts of how the Comtesse de Londe who was Grace Deverin, never paid her bills; how much Colonel Bardy lost at bridge in one afternoon, how disgracefully Mrs. Thomas Ebsley danced the tango, and how brazen was Gladys Druce who was after all, still a young girl. Gradually the conversation slid into scandalous paths. The women's voices grew eager and sharp, they stopped eating to talk. Mrs. White's eyes shone in bright, wicked animation. Lucia curved downwards the corners of her thin lips. Mrs. Earle grew flushed of cheek. All of a sudden David felt weary and disgusted. It hurt him to hear Lucia taking such active part in what he considered deliberate ugliness of mind and spirit.

"Yes," she was saying, as pecking daintily at her salad, she smiled at him, "Daisy is tired of that little Ernest de Gannes. I don't blame her. I hear by the way, Marian, that she's affiché'd herself now with that Russian attaché . . . Alexandre Vosnitch."

"What's affiché'd mean?" asked David suddenly.

His wife glanced over at him. "Oh, don't you know? It's French slang, it means that she doesn't mind giving people the chance of knowing the truth. When a woman's seen around with the same man everywhere . . . Well, you know what people are apt to say," she shrugged her shoulders in an amused little manner.

"I call it rotten!" said David bluntly.

Mrs. White laughed. "Dear me, everyone does, here, sooner or later. If they don't they get talked about anyway."

Not noticing a rapid glance exchanged between the two women nor Lucia's quick warning frown, David turned to Mrs. Earle. "I don't like Lucia talking about such things," he said. "It isn't nice."

Mrs. Earle looked annoyed.

"My dear David . . . In Paris one gets accustomed to it."

David was growing angry. "I don't care a damn what they do in Paris," he cried. "My wife's not going to talk like a woman who isn't nice."

Mrs. White giggled, but her eyes were malicious. "Well, really, Mr. Ghent, I consider myself rather

decent, and yet I always have perfect freedom of speech."

David turned on her quickly. "That's between you and your husband. I'm only speaking of my wife."

Lucia's lips were set in a pinched straight line. Her blue eyes had grown glacial. "David! let us change the subject. And will you oblige me by not using bad language, at least before me and my friends."

He subsided then, uncomfortably aware that the displeasure of the three women was directed against him.

At last luncheon was over. Mrs. White and Mrs. Earle left the dining-room, but Lucia lingered and came up to him, her face cold and cruel.

"I'll never introduce you to another of my friends here. What can she think of you? No man of the world would ever have acted the way you did."

"I'm not a society man, thank Heaven," said David. "I'm a good American citizen, Lucia, and also your husband."

"Well, if you've come over here to scold and object to everything . . ." complained Lucia.

"Lucia!" He tried to take her hand and draw her to him but she jerked away. "No, I'm cross with you."

He looked at her then with reproachful gray eyes. "Little girl, don't you love me any more?"

"What a question!" she said pettishly.

"You don't act as if you did." He did not try

to keep the sadness from his voice. Céline, coming into the room, seeing him with Lucia, tiptoed out again.

"Don't be silly, David," said Lucia. "Céline wants to clear the table. Come along." She led the way into the salon where Mrs. White stood adjusting her veil before the mirror.

"Lucia, I have to go. I have a dressmaker at two. Will you be at Polo this afternoon? I heard you promising Ludwig you'd go."

David looked up quickly. Ludwig was the name of the man on the photograph.

"No, I won't go this afternoon," said Lucia in a slow careless voice.

Mrs. White smiled. "Very well, dear, to-morrow then. Good-by, Mr. Ghent, so glad to have met you . . . Good-by, dear."

Lucia went into the hall with her friend and stayed whispering. David restlessly fingered the porcelain boxes on the little table, while Mrs. Earle, without attempt at any conversation, picked up a few fallen rose-petals from the piano.

When Lucia came back, David went over to her.

"What can we do this afternoon, dearie?"

She looked a little vague.

"Oh, I don't know. I have several things I ought to do."

"Little girl," he said, "I've come all the way over here to be with you. Aren't you going to let me?"

She stood still a moment thinking. "Of course I am . . . We might go to Enghien," she said.

"What's that?"

"It's just outside of Paris. There's a casino."

"Oh, a gambling place."

She looked ready for another small outburst of temper. "Well, that oughtn't to frighten you, David."

"It doesn't," he said quietly. "We'll go there."

"Very well then," she said without enthusiasm. "Mother, what are you going to do?"

"Oh, not much," said Mrs. Earle tranquilly. "I have a fitting at Beers, I've got one or two other errands, and then Mrs. Williams' tea."

David felt now only one desire, to have Lucia all to himself for the afternoon. "Put on your things and let's go, dear," he said.

In the hall the dark-haired girl busied herself silently bringing out Lucia's gloves and veil, and helping David on with his coat. Once he caught her looking intently at him, but joyous at the prospect of an afternoon with his wife, he did not notice that there was pity in the maid's eyes.

"Come along, sweetheart!" he called like a schoolboy.

"I'm coming, David," said Lucia, and followed him very slowly down the stairs.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DAVID thought for the moment that he was happy. He sat beside Lucia in the taxi motor, and held her hand, and stared eagerly out of the window; for this was one of the times he had so ardently expected. He was going to see something at last of Paris, with Lucia.

The motor skimmed through the avenues and streets, where in great tides of sound the city life clattered by discordantly.

Earth was redolent of Spring, of nascent bloom and color, basking in blue and amber shine, with long silvery streaks and trees that dripped light. The beings, brilliantly arrayed, who drifted past were caught as in a prism, which fused them into variegated schemes of movement and harmony. The bright air was subtly sweet and sad.

"Say, this is great!" cried David blithely.

The window on Lucia's side of the motor was closed. She stared out of it with languid lack of interest.

"Yes, it's very pretty."

"Oh, girl, what a lot we can do together now. Why! I'm just beginning to live!" He squeezed the limp hand that lay in his.

"It seems to me you've done nothing else," she said.

"There's a great deal for a man like me to learn," he said. "You'll have to teach me, Lucia,

you know lots of the beautiful things I've missed."

"I don't know anything," she said with a faint smile.

David's unspoiled senses of sight and smell were keenly alive. He turned eagerly to Lucia.

An absent-minded look had crept into her face.

"It's fine to be here."

She stared unseeingly out of the window.

"Lucia."

"Yes, dear."

"Who'd have thought when I first met you at Lake Grove that we'd be *here* driving together?"

"It is strange," she said.

"No, it isn't strange. I knew it. Soon as I laid eyes on you, you were my girl."

"Did you?" she turned curiously cold blue eyes upon him.

"Didn't you, sweetheart?"

"I was so young then," she murmured.

"Well, you're young yet," he said.

Every once in a while he would ask her questions about the villages they were passing.

"Tell me, dearie, where are we?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Perhaps you haven't been out this way."

"Lots of times, but I never noticed."

He looked away from her then, constructing, surmising, deducing, information from all he saw,—the people, the houses, the country.

"We're nearly at Enghien," said Lucia at last.

Then he fumbled in his pockets and drew out a leather wallet.

"Here, dearie . . . here's something for you to amuse yourself with," and he handed her five one hundred franc bills. "Get in the game. I know how it is."

She took the notes from him carelessly, and tucked them away in her little gold bag, leaning forward once to look into a short narrow mirror which was nailed between the front windows of the motor.

"Here we are," she said at last.

A motley crowd streamed in the direction of the Casino which was a garbled white affair like an indigestible sugar desert of some kind, standing on the border of a toy lake. Canoes and rowboats managed by unskillful oarsmen, wobbled precariously over the glistening surface of this lake. Cottages nestled around its wooded edges. A wide terrace leading to the Casino was colorfully strewn with people, some of whom sat on benches and stared at the lake, others who walked to and fro as if they were on the deck of a steamer; still others, and these the greatest number, streamed up the steps of the Casino to the gaming rooms.

David walked along with this throng, alert of eye, curious as a child in a strange world.

"Gee! I don't see many good-lookers," he whispered to Lucia. "You're the best dressed woman here."

"I should hope so!" she answered in an absent-minded way, as she moved forward, her head held high, a gentle reticence closing as it were all expression from her face.

"I'm going to play the little horses," she told

David, and with experienced assurance led him into the Casino.

He drew a deep breath and whistled: "Whew!"

The atmosphere was suffocating. There were too strong scents and the stale flat odor of a room where windows are never sufficiently opened.

Big mirrors reflected a swarm of men and women billowing back and forth in ceaseless restlessness, or standing strained and attentive around the tables.

Lucia slipped, cool and indifferent, through the hybrid gathering. David thought how much finer, better bred and distinguished she was, than all the women, around her. Here every one went a secret way, with crumpled masks showing furtive gleams of greed and tension. But it would seem as if Lucia had no secret way, so controlled, so haughty was her advance to the table where lay the game of Little Horses.

"You're a great girl," murmured David to her. But she did not answer.

At the table there was a vacant chair. She sank into it without turning to see if David were behind her. Caught in the circle of lookers-on, he yielded to the slow shift of movement, and soon found himself at the opposite side of the table where he could see Lucia.

She had already changed her banknotes to gold, and sat, holding a twenty franc piece as if she were weighing it, her eyes narrowed, her mouth thoughtful.

Then with all his determination to be tolerant and understanding, David could not help a swift instant

of revolt and distaste at seeing his wife in such a place, with such people surrounding her. A blond woman with a hooked nose and full scarlet lips, and ugly hands, was sitting at Lucia's left, her elbow touching Lucia's arm. An unpleasant little man who nibbled nervously at a moth-eaten mustache, whose eyes were shifty and whose cuffs were soiled sat at Lucia's right. Behind her, pressed a sharp-faced, over dressed group of men and women.

The little leaden horses and the stiff painted jockeys circled round and round, David watched them in a moment of diverted interest. Had he been alone, or had Lucia stood beside him as a spectator, he would have enjoyed this game. Anything to do with horses or racing awoke in him a nostalgic thrilled remembrance of the days in Sydney, of Dan Sullivan and of Betty. So this artificial, painted toy could have given him keen boyish pleasure. But Lucia worried him. He looked away from the horses, his eyes seeking her. He could not at once find her; until suddenly his roving glance caught by the exaggeratedly gold hair of the blond woman, alighted upon her neighbor, Lucia. Then he knew why he had not at once found her. In a subtle, indefinable way, Lucia had lost the fineness of air and breeding which at first had distinguished her from the others. She looked now weirdly like the blond woman, the unkempt little man, and the sharp-faced people behind her.

David was so shocked at what he saw, that for an instant he stood motionless, staring over at her. A general diffused grossness had as if thickened the lit-

tle crowd and drawn them together. A vulgarizing similarity of pose grouped them, a tarnishing shadow of anxiety hovered over their faces. There was a wolfish spark in their eyes and a covetous tightness about their mouths, a complete and unconscious surrender of expression.

Lucia was losing. It seemed as if everyone around her were losing also. She and the blond woman, and the little man, and a Russian-Jew beyond, all clutched at diminishing piles of silver and gold. There was the same shrewd starved look about them. Lucia had a cruel downward curve to her lips, that made her years older. David stared. It seemed to him as if he were knowing Lucia in a horrible relentless way as he had never before known her. He had thought her a child; she was not a child. Her wheat colored hair, her blue eyes, her thin lips, caught unawares, bore betraying clews of hidden things. She looked cruel and scheming and cold. David saw as in a blur what was not meant for him to see.

When a woman loses at a game of chance, she reveals herself. Her smile shrivels, her airs and graces drop away. A secret indifference or envy, or ugly or honest thought swirls to the surface and betrays, in a grimace or a smile.

Lucia felt David's stare, glanced up and though unaware of her own expression strove to adjust a conventional smile to the stiff line of her lips. But she could not. So she lowered her eyes quickly. Her silhouette, slender and finely cut in the trim sailor-suit, her little head with the graceful hat, gave

an incongruous impression of something dainty and unattainable.

David looked no longer. Elbowing his way, in spite of resentful frowns and muttered reproofs from strangers pushed aside, he came up behind her and touched her shoulder.

She gave a little start and glanced around with a nervous displeasure, that contracted her face to even greater intensity.

"You've brought me bad luck — go away," she whispered.

He thrust his hand in his pockets and turned from her before she could notice the look in his eyes.

The crowd now in this room, moving turgidly around the tables, the monotonous indifferent voice of the croupier, the women who some of them eyed him with cunning provocation — all the sordid little world with its tawdry trimmings so thinly disguising its secret purpose, was identified in some mysterious way with Lucia, his wife, cheapening her irrevocably.

The dominant impression upon David of the entire place in fact, was one of hopeless cheapness. There was nothing big about it, nothing compelling — only small sharp lusts playing at little games.

He lounged near the baccarat table, without much interest, and after a while made his way back to Lucia. She was winning now, and her expression was even more painful than when she had been losing. Her blue eyes glittered; her cheeks were flushed. Beside her the blond, beak-nosed woman, who was still losing, cast looks of nervous envy and hate.

"Go away, Davy, I've made up nearly all I've lost."

"I'll give you twice that, but let's go for God's sake," said David.

"Please stay a little longer."

"No." His voice was definite. She gave one look at his face and rose, fretfully stuffing the gold and notes in her bag. As they made their way out of the room he stared at her once or twice curiously, but she had regained control, and her expression was again haughty and dignified. He could hardly believe she was the same woman he had seen gambling, with all that was covetous and cruel stamped in her eyes and mouth.

They walked along silently to the entrance of the Casino. The afternoon had sifted away to a clear, still glow preceding twilight. The lake shimmered in opalescent tints; upon it lolled little boats. A stream of people surged slowly down the terrace to the gate.

David did not speak, until he was settled again in the taxi-motor, rolling back to Paris. Then he drew a long sigh of relief.

"Never let me see you gambling again."

"Why not?" her voice was sharp.

"Because it isn't becoming," he said bluntly, and turning in his seat looked at her for the first time in his life with curiously speculative eyes. "I wonder if I'd like to know you as you really are?" he said.

She stiffened to a quick show of indignation. "I don't understand."

"Oh yes, you do . . . I guess you do," he murmured as if to himself.

"I don't think you're very nice," she put a hand on his arm, and with sudden insistence made him look at her again.

"What do you mean by knowing me? Who should, if you don't, Davy?"

"Everyone else," he answered laconically.

But her eyes were so blue and reproachful, that without knowing why, he felt as if he had been unjustly brutal.

"Because I hated to lose *your* money," she began.

"Oh, Lucia girl — it wasn't that."

She fumbled in her bag. "Here, take it back."

He put a hand over hers. "No, no, dearie. You shall have plenty more. It isn't the money, but I just hated to see you there with all those people, gambling."

The motor glided through the streets, that closed behind them in cool blue shadows thickening to dusk at the far fringe of trees. The wan disk of an early moon sailed pensively in the late afternoon sky.

"Where shall we go now?" cried David after a short silence.

"Why, I thought home."

"Well, I guess not. We're going to have tea at some real fashionable place, Lucia. I've come over here to give you and myself a good time." He was striving generously to efface from his mind the disagreeable impression he had received at Enghien and was only too ready again to be tender and expansive.

"We'll go to the Ritz. A fellow in New York told me to be sure to go to the Ritz for tea."

"Oh, no, not there!" protested Lucia with sudden impulsive warmth.

"Why not?"

"Oh, because. . . ." A slight confusion crept into her voice. "Because I'm not dressed up enough."

"Nonsense, you look fine!" he said, and before she could prevent him he leaned out of the window and shouted to the chauffeur: "Ritz Hotel."

"David, I don't *want* to go to the Ritz."

"But why, girlie?"

"I know too many people there. I . . . I don't feel like seeing people to-day."

"Don't you want me to meet your friends, is that it?"

"Don't be silly!" she answered crossly.

"If I thought that!" Then with a sudden brutal movement he drew her to him and kissed her. She struggled in his arms.

"David."

"Well, aren't you my wife?"

"Only vulgar people do that kind of thing."

"I'm vulgar then," he said.

The motor slid up through streets and avenues, among a whirling tooting procession of other taxis and luxurious private machines. There was a sense of holiday in the air. All the pretty women who passed, seemed to be drifting towards some place of amusement. Everything was in a brilliant disorder, spilled pell-mell over the gray green foliaged city.

David staring out of the window, remarked enthusiastically, " Say, this is the real thing."

As they came near the Ritz, Lucia's face darkened. " I wish you wouldn't insist on going here," she fretted.

The motor was swinging into the entrance of the hotel, when suddenly she gave a little cry and clutched at his arm.

" I simply won't, that's all . . . I won't."

" What's the matter? Seen a ghost? " said David.

" I won't go," she leaned out of the window on the far side of the hotel, and cried to the chauffeur: " Go to Rumpelmeyer's."

Then she sank back into her seat, putting up a hand to straighten her hat.

" What in the name of everything is the matter? " cried David, and as the motor veered about, he stared at the hotel entrance, for some explanation of Lucia's singular conduct. No one was in sight, except a liveried porter and a man who stood with his back half turned, bending his head to light a cigarette. This man was tall and slight. He wore a straw hat and his clothes fitted him as if he were corseted. He looked vaguely familiar, but David could not at once place him.

A little frown of perplexity gathered between his eyes. There was much in all this he did not understand.

" Why wouldn't you go to the Ritz, Lucia? " he asked again. She shrank into the corner of the motor. " Call it caprice, nerves, anything, Davy. I hate the Ritz, you know."

"Who was that man?"

A wave of red crept to her face. "What man?"

"You know . . . the one in the door."

"Was there a man? I didn't notice."

David watched her closely. "Didn't you? I thought you saw him."

She laughed as if relieved. "Oh, no!"

"Huh!" he grunted. But the shadow between his eyes did not lighten, even when seated at a little table among a gay colorful throng at the tea-place, Rumpelmeyer's, Lucia turned towards him with a bright face.

"Tea, Davy?"

"Oh, anything."

She chattered on, now, telling him who a woman was, sitting in the corner of the densely packed room; why Rumpelmeyer was so much nicer than any other tea-room; how often she had come there; how vulgar those Americans looked who were at the next table — a multitude in fact of small futilities.

David stayed thoughtfully still, letting her talk. Suddenly leaning forward, he planted his elbows on the table, and without even waiting for her to finish a trifling gay little phrase, he said bluntly: "How long is this going to last, Lucia?"

The gay little phrase chopped in the middle by the harshness of his voice, quivered away. "You're very rude to interrupt me, David, I don't understand what you mean."

"This is all very well," he went on. "But I'm not your husband."

"Not my husband! . . . Why, David Ghent."

"Will you come and stay at my hotel then?"

"Hush . . . Not so loud! How can I leave Mamma?"

"Mamma has gotten on without you before this."

"David, be careful please, everyone's looking at you."

"Oh, damn!" he swore softly. "Let's get out of here."

"I'd think we'd better!" she retorted.

As they stepped out under the arcades of the rue de Rivoli, she turned to him, with a hurt resigned look in her eyes. "I'll drive back with you to the hotel."

"I don't suppose we're dining together," he remarked.

"I'm so sorry . . ." she began.

"But I couldn't get out of it," he finished for her. "All right, old girl, go ahead." He swung beside her into the motor with sudden recklessness. He was beginning to be grimly amused at the impossible absurdity of the situation.

"Oh, David, I forgot to tell you, Emily is arriving shortly and Jim is coming with her," said his wife, as if striving to find something which would please him.

"That so?" he said indifferently. In his present mood nothing mattered to him.

When they reached the hotel, he turned to her: "Coming up?"

"Indeed, yes," she slipped out and walked beside him to the elevator. But he did not even look at her.

CHAPTER XXIX

DAVID in great lassitude and despondency of spirit, plowed his way through a week of troubled existence, in which he was at the mercy of Lucia's moods. But strive as he would for a definite revolt against her and her mother's attitude towards him, the very power of anger seemed deadened by pain and deception. It was as if the springs of his will were broken. Moreover, there was nothing tangible upon which to base a satisfactory explanation. Lucia, in many subtle ways, eluded his blunt questions. She became so charming as soon as he showed any signs of actual impatience, that she always succeeded in disarming him.

She gave, in his honor, a dinner and a tea in her house, to which came many strangers. As a matter of fact they were strangers to David not only before but after he met them. The women for the most part were of the same type as Mrs. Horace B. White, triumphant samples of what dressmakers, hairdressers, modistes, and a smattering of European culture could make them. They had attained indeed a facility of elegance in dress and manner which concealed admirably many small deficiencies of brain and heart.

David took no pleasure in any of them. Even the Clubs where he was put up, failed to represent

that masculine sense of freedom and comfort, which make such institutions valuable means of escape from feminine society.

The men who belonged to them, many of them, were fluent diplomats or vaguely titled gentlemen of leisure who evaded David's direct manner, in such a suavely courteous way, that he never knew whether they had meant to be insolent or over-polite. He felt more at his ease with the American men, who by chance, were living in Paris with their wives, or like himself were taking a holiday. But even these countrymen did not meet him with that complete frankness to which he was accustomed. There was indeed in their attitude towards him, a covert stiffness, which without being defined annoyed him. For they at least should have known who he was, and his rank among men in America.

He did not fit easily in this world of voluntary expatriots. Nor could he acquire in so short a time the necessary cosmopolitan adaptability to its standard of snobbism. Once or twice he felt distinctly that Lucia was apologizing for him.

"My husband is a mining man," he heard her say. "I have never known anyone so refreshingly American." Her voice had been faintly depreciative.

By the end of a week then, he was sick at heart, and bewildered at the life she and her mother were forcing upon him. Moreover he felt with acute if unanalyzed perception that he was being watched with a vaguely malicious curiosity by many of the people to whom Lucia introduced him. Several

times questions which seemed frankly indiscreet, were addressed to him. For how long was he in Paris? Would his wife go back with him to America? Was he not lonely at home without her?

The rare moments when he was alone with her, she was tender and guileless of manner, with an element of feminine appeal which softened the latent growing resentment, and the distrust in his heart. But Mrs. Earle was frankly less cordial, and her aloofness was accentuated each day. He felt her behind Lucia, pulling the invisible strings of intangible combinations.

One day at a big tea given by Mrs. Horace B. White, he was unpleasantly impressed at seeing the man whose picture he had noticed in Lucia's salon — Ludwig von Lenze. All the more so, because he now identified him with the man at the Ritz Hotel, the afternoon Lucia had refused to go there for tea. Admitting the possibility of coincidence, for David was indeed of an unsuspicious nature, the man was inexplicably antagonistic. There was something bloodless and dry about the stiff narrow shoulders of this German; something insolent and evasive in his parchment colored face, with its long thin nose, thin lips and slightly sunken eyes. David did not want to know him, or have anything to do with him. As there were many people at the tea it was easy enough to avoid meeting everyone present.

But for the first time in his life, David watched Lucia, conscious of an obscure uneasiness. He reasoned that if there were anything between them, it would be visible at once. He could not have ex-

plained how the idea of such a possibility had come into his head.

She was looking very beautiful that afternoon, in a long black dress, with a black straw hat, sweeping away in a fine long line over her hair. David was surprised and pleased to notice that she spoke to this man only once, and then as if by chance, when he and she were standing in a corner of the room together. Lucia had her back turned to David, and while she talked to von Lenze her manner seemed subdued and correct.

Later in the afternoon David asked her:

"Who was that tall fellow you were with about five minutes ago?"

She looked up quickly. "Oh, that was Monsieur von Lenze."

"You have his picture at home, haven't you?"

She laughed, as if amused.

"You remember? Why, yes, I have, because it is decorative. But I don't see much of him any more."

"I'm glad of that," said David.

It seemed to him on this afternoon, that everyone he knew went out of his or her way to come up and speak to him. But there was no joy for him in the peering inquisitive way people had of sidling around him and looking mysterious, and asking him questions he could not or did not want to answer.

When at last he left the sumptuous over-lighted place with Lucia, he felt drearier than ever — a dreariness indeed which thickened over night, invading mind and soul.

It was then that he decided to go for a week or so

to England. There were business reasons contributing to this plan. An agent of Henry Lynham's was then in London. David received daily reports from New York concerning the fabulous rise in the stocks of the Lode Stone copper mine. But in the dull disappointment at his shattered holiday, in his enforced idleness, when Paris, careless, indifferent, and unrevealing to his ignorance, seemed to have nothing to offer him but a stale, cooked-over repetition of all the social functions he had so disliked in San Francisco — his thoughts returned wistfully to business questions, which after all contained for him the essentials of life. The fact that he was a rich man did not seem to have helped him further along in his ambition to improve himself mentally and morally.

There was Lucia, to whom he had looked for encouragement. Since she, his wife, did not claim interest in his development and dreams, there seemed no incentive towards a finer appreciation of what lay beyond the mere struggle for material prosperity.

After all, Lucia without the flicker of an eye-lash, could spend everything that David gave her. Therefore remained the instinct of material progress, and of rivalry with men. For tangible results are brought about only by single, directed concentration and narrowing determination to gain wealth above knowledge. In short the destiny of a vision which might have grown and ripened was to be synthetized in just one practical utilitarian direction. David's imagination dragged back from its wavering flights, turned again to the long strenuous fight to

end with modern definition of success: financial prosperity.

The decision to go to London was the inevitable result of a certain restless discontent of inactivity. When he told Lucia that he was leaving her in Paris for a week or two, she showed no more than conventional regret, but Mrs. Earle did not even have the grace to pretend that much to him.

"I think it is a good idea, David," she said in her cool detached voice. "If I could spare Lucia, I would suggest her going with you. But I don't feel well enough to be left alone."

"Poor Mamma!" murmured Lucia, looking very lovely and resigned.

So bidding his unemotional womenfolk good-by, David left on a brilliant May morning for London.

In that other big city, so gray and murky even in the sunshine with that pungent smell of smoke and coal in the air and that complete orderliness and respect of class which has not yet been suppressed, David felt himself more at home. The language he could understand brought him a revival of self-respect.

He realized indeed a yearning for English country. He thought of austere old Ghent House, his birthplace, and the fragrant garden and the ancestral tree beneath which had sat grandmother Arnold. He remembered his boyhood, its tender, its tragic moments. He acknowledged a longing to see it all again. Then came swiftly the violent image of his father, and his heart, bruised and sore enough, from recently inflicted wounds, shrank at the evoked pain

of this memory. His father might wither away alone in Ghent House; he might die, and the old place drop into decay, and the inheritance remain forever unclaimed. He, David, last of the Ghent family, would never go back. So he thrust back the instinct of sentiment, and turned forever from pity a filial appeal to the fierce eyed, thin lipped old man, who was perhaps even then sickening of loveless solitude.

He thought instead of other things, and people. He met with pleasure several business acquaintances, dined, went to the theaters and supped with them; and would in fact have been happy in a perfectly masculine way, had it not been for a low-lying heaviness of heart leading back to the haunting sense of impending domestic drama.

He arrived back in Paris late one evening, without having informed Lucia of his coming. He was in company of Henry Lynham's agent, a very good fellow who, as familiar with Paris as with London, immediately suggested that they take supper at the Café Américain.

Certain in any case to find Lucia otherwise engaged, David willingly accepted his proposal.

The two men strolled from the Palace Élysée Hotel where they were staying, down the avenue to the rue Royale.

It was a mellow and late hour, when the exodus from theaters, according to means and moods streamed supperwards.

David stared with considerable interest at the multifarious collection of human beings shuffling up

the garishly lighted boulevards. Here elbow to elbow, skirts brushing skirts, in a closely knitted throng was all the scale of man and womanhood. Here herded together they passed and repassed as if they were paid to parade, or else condemned to it. David questioned eagerly each face that emerged for a second from the blurred confusion of so many. These faces, young and old, all showed somewhere the creased, ineradicable lines of fatigue and pain, the fine cruel impress that a secret of life was teaching them. Once in a long while, in the crowd, a flower-like face, the serenity of a noble brow, the pensive stern gaze of eagle eyes, the purity of a chance virgin, flashed forth sublime, inattackable. But as a whole, there was an impression on all of restless uncertainty. Grim shadows, drab flattened resignation to nameless destinies, with that slinking, furtive, thick red-lipped creature, sex, mingling cunningly in the conscious throng.

David felt sad, and looked over the heads of passers-by to the people in carriages and motors, who seemed more suave of mask.

Suddenly he saw Lucia.

She was in a big brightly lit, closed car, wedged between two other women. Two men sat opposite, their knees touching the satin covered knees of the women. Lucia wore a tall waving bird plume in her hair. Her opera cloak was of red brocade. She was smiling into the face of a man whom David recognized as Ludwig von Lenze.

Then the motor slipped by with a long eery whistle and toot. She had not seen David.

The image of her and her companion, caught as in a swift snapshot burned before David's eyes so that he closed them for a second. Then he felt the drive and jolt of strangers around him pushing him on, and opened his eyes to find his friend, Harry Mason, looking at him curiously.

"What's up, old chap?"

"Oh, nothing — a cramp —" answered David. "Say, Harry, I don't feel very well. If you don't mind, I guess I'll go home."

Refusing his friend's solicitous offer to accompany him back to the hotel, he left the boulevards, left the stained weary stream of fellow-men, and trudged back alone to the hotel. There with stern justice he questioned his somber presentiment. From what small things had a suspicion grown. Coincidence again! — that ally or enemy which may prove a plausible excuse or become an accusation. Lucia had been to the theater with friends. This narrow-shouldered German might so easily have been invited with no harm meant.

David wrestling honestly with his doubts could find no legitimate and immediate reason for the intuitive trouble and dismay at sight of a man he did not even know.

It ended by a clean casting away of unworthy thoughts and with determined faith in Lucia, his wife, who in spite of all, he loved.

With this victory in his heart, he fell asleep that night.

CHAPTER XXX

DAVID thought to please Lucia by bringing her flowers — not the kind with all the dew dried from them, that stayed in shop windows, but a great bunch of specially plucked bloom, with the savor of early morning, and country and health to them.

This was his way of casting from him the morbid injustice of his thoughts the preceding night. Lucia was after all young and cold. Her youth explained much of her irresponsibility; her coldness was guarantee of her virtue. He must never forget these things.

So he made up his mind to go to her, bringing her flowers and ask her very honestly to come away with him to other countries where he had so often dreamed of traveling with her. There was Italy for instance, a place for lovers, he had heard, where with him close beside her and no one else — no mother, no friends, no obligations — she would have to turn to him and let him love her.

He was up at dawn that soft Spring morning and following the advice of a friendly hall-porter stole out into the ghostly, deserted streets and went to the Halles, the big markets, where he might find the most beautiful flowers in Paris, for Lucia.

Around these markets, and in their tunnel-shaped spaces lurked an earthy odor of roots, a sharp-edged

smell of leaves. A world of vegetables, fruit and flowers, flaming colored through the mists of morning, were stocked on the pavements and in the stalls. Over all was the wild perfume of gardens.

The old market women with red faces and coarse hands, stood watchfully beside their wares, arms akimbo, voices shrill. When they saw David they beckoned and called to him. "Monsieur, this way!"

"My little man, won't you buy from me?"

"I will give you good prices, Monsieur."

There was one very old woman who offered him bunches and bunches of red roses. He took as many as he could carry. They were dewy and fragrant and held a rich promise of summer. Then he left the markets and went to Lucia. All the way up to her apartment, he kept thinking how pleased she would be with the roses.

The streets were astir now; blinds were drawn and windows open. The May morning was like a gray enameled cup filled with pink wine. Against the blue sky, David's arm full of roses burned red and warm.

Céline, the young maid, opened the door of the apartment. When she saw David she started back and a faint look of surprise and alarm flickered across her face.

"Oh, you, Monsieur."

"Hello, Seeline!" cried David in a high good-humor stepping into the hall. "See what I've brought my wife."

"Madame will be enchanted," said the girl quickly, and bending sniffed at the roses. "How

they are sweet! If Monsieur will step in the salon a little instant, I will tell Madame."

There was an aroma of coffee in the hall. A pair of long white kid gloves lay coiled on the low wooden chest, and a broom and soft duster leaned against the wall. Céline hurried David into the Salon.

"If Monsieur will excuse — nothing is done in the house at this hour," she smiled and tiptoed away, carefully closing the door behind her.

David would not put down his roses. He stood holding them, looking around the room as if he had never been in it before. Light sifted through the lace curtains and splashed over the old rose hangings, the rugs and the gold brocade on the piano. The silver shone in white and blue reflections, a fragile spray of pink flowers in a tall vase drooped in first gentle wilting.

Three glasses and a bottle of whisky stood on the table, next to a silver tray of stale cigarette ashes. David looked at them idly, wondering who had been the three people to drink from these glasses. Then not because of any deliberate intention on his part, but because he was standing in front of the piano, he happened to glance down and see the photograph of Ludwig von Lenze. The face of this man was distinctly unpleasant. It was not the face of a clean-hearted honest man.

"I wouldn't trust you around the corner," muttered David and turned away restlessly.

He was tired of holding the roses, and stared towards the door. Part of the joy of his surprise was

somehow already gone. He was about to open the door and walk into the hall, when Céline hurried back looking flushed and angry.

"In a moment, Monsieur," she said, and marched over to the table where stood the glasses and the bottle. With a brisk gesture she rattled the glasses together, snatched up the bottle, and started across the floor. As she came near to David she paused, and seemed impulsively about to speak.

"Say I'm tired waiting," he remarked.

Then, with a rapid secretive motion she touched his arm.

"Let Monsieur keep his eyes open," she whispered, and flitted out of the room. The glasses knocking together tinkled like little bells.

"Now, what the devil . . ." began David.

The door opened and Mrs. Earle entered. She was dressed in a white silk wrapper of ample folds, which made her look stouter than usual. Her hair was drawn tightly back and pinned in a severe knot at the top of her head, which gave her an unfamiliar homely look. David had never before seen her without the crown of artfully prepared smooth curls, and tortoise-shell pins.

She smiled in a forced cordial way. "Good morning, David, when did you get back from England?" As she spoke, she glanced at the roses in his arms, and then quickly to the floor as if to see if any had fallen.

"Yesterday," he said. "Can't I go in and see Lucia?"

"Do, by all means. The child has just had her

coffee." She led the way from the salon and David trod after her down the hall to a door which she opened gently.

Lucia was sitting up in a big lace-covered bed, a blue satin quilt spread over her feet. There was lace and ribbons on the pillow and lace and ribbons on Lucia's little dressing jacket. She looked all white and gold of face and hair with eyes that were blue as summer seas. The room was big and bright with morning beams that played across the silver on her dressing table.

"Hallo, Davy!" she called out.

Then it seemed to David as if at sight of her and sound of her voice, everything perplexing and disagreeable fell away. He entered a kingdom, such as it was, where a girl of old welcomed him.

He strode forward, held the roses high over her head and dropped them in a shower. This he had planned to do when he bought them. They scattered riotously over the bed, some slid on the floor, and lay in vivid stains against the blue carpet.

She laughed like a child and clapped her hands. "Oh, how nice of you, David." Then a sudden reticent look crept into her face, aging it. She bent her head hastily to smell a rose.

"I went to the market this morning on purpose to get them for you," he said, and bent over to kiss her. Mrs. Earle stooped and began picking up the flowers that had fallen on the floor.

"Now, Mamma, do leave them alone," said Lucia in a fretful voice.

But Mrs. Earle, without answering rang a little white enameled bell and went on picking up the roses.

David sat on the edge of the bed grasping Lucia's hand in his.

" I'm sorry if I've made a mess, Mrs. Earle," he said good humoredly.

In answering to the bell Céline glided into the room and cast a quick sidelong glance at him.

" Bring the big bowl," Mrs. Earle said to her.

" It was sweet of you, David," murmured Lucia. There was unusual cordiality in her voice and manner.

" If you like them, it is all I want," answered David happily, staring around the room with alert, interested eyes. A faded gardenia, crumpled and blackened but of hauntingly sweet perfume, lay on the dressing table; a pair of filmy black silk stockings hung over a low blue-cushioned chair. David unconsciously surrendered to the feminine appeal of this blue and white room which seemed to contain so many charming helpless evidences of a pretty woman's charming, helpless life.

" Say, Lucia, I saw you last night," said he in a quick, returning mood of boyishness.

Her hand in his moved like the flutter of a small frightened bird, but she was smiling and her blue eyes were wide open and innocent as she answered.

" Did you? . . . Where? "

" I guess you were coming back from the theater with some friends," said David in a sober voice.

Céline returned just then with a big cut-glass bowl full of water.

"Bring it here," ordered Lucia sharply, and bending over as Céline put it on the little table by the bed, with deft fingers she began arranging the roses.

"You wouldn't look at me!" continued David.

Lucia gave a little cry. "Ouch! I've pricked my finger on a thorn!"

"Here let me see it." David took the thin soft hand in his and kissed an invisible wound on the thumb.

Mrs. Earle drew her wrapper closer about her, and with a gesture that seemed to indicate decision, sat down on a comfortable chair near the bed. Lucia darted a quick glance at her from between narrowed eyes.

"Aren't you going to dress, mamma?"

"Not this minute — no," returned her mother quietly.

David fidgeted, watching Lucia fix the roses. He wished Mrs. Earle would leave them together. Ever since he could remember, ever since the first days in Lake Grove, Mrs. Earle had never seemed willing to leave him alone with Lucia.

There was a short silence, then David rose from the edge of the bed and began to pace the room.

"Dearie, I've come this morning with a proposition."

Lucia stirred among the pillows, pushed the bowl of roses in place on the little table, and looked up with sudden attention.

"Yes, Davy?"

"I suggest," continued David, "I suggest that you and I go to Italy for a month or so, Lucia. I've always wanted to see those places. There's Venice now, and Florence. You'd like Venice, Lucia." His voice was wistful.

"I think that would be lovely, Davy," said Lucia with a faint suggestion of reserve, "but . . ."

"But, what?" David stopped his pacing and stood at the foot of the bed, his hands in his pockets. "But what?"

The expression of her eyes had deepened to obscure trouble and embarrassment. She looked up at him appealingly.

"But I don't see how I can, just now."

"Why can't you?" David's voice was rough-edged. The old feeling returned of things he could not understand.

"Because," said Mrs. Earle, suddenly taking part in the conversation, "Lucia is in the midst of ordering summer clothes, David; she has nothing to wear. She couldn't leave Paris that way."

"Oh, it doesn't matter about clothes!" cried David out of patience. "And anyway, Mrs. Earle, I don't want to seem disagreeable, but I think this matter is for me and Lucia to decide."

Mrs. Earle rose, with a show of offended majesty. "Of course, if you feel that I have nothing to say about my own daughter . . ."

"Mother, sit down. . . . How can you be rude to Mother!" exclaimed Lucia.

"I didn't mean to be rude," murmured David, "but hang it all, Lucia, I haven't been treated right

since I arrived. Now that I want you to come away on a little trip I've been so looking forward to, it seems too bad that your mother should interfere."

"She isn't interfering!" cried Lucia quickly.

Mrs. Earle shrugged her shoulders, as if to call the attention of an invisible jury to the abuse she was enduring.

"Well then, will you come with me?" He waited for her answer with a grim instinct that it would be significant of many things. Indeed he had not realized, until he had actually asked her, how important this answer would be. But now the question had been raised, he stood before her in a sterner mood than he had thought possible. His face must have shown an obstinate will she was unaccustomed to see, for she lowered her eyes and her thin lips pinched to a secretive line.

"I'm sorry. It isn't mother, but I can't go just now."

"Now look here," said David, coming around to the side of the bed. "This damned foolishness has lasted long enough, my girl. I've asked you this in the nicest way and you've refused. Now I'm going to tell you in another way. You're going to come with me to Italy next week — see."

He stood in erect, lean-limbed poise, his eyes gray as steel, in shadow. There was a definite ring to his voice. But when Lucia looked up at him, there lay revealed in her face, a silent, unfathomable antagonism, a counter-will which sharpened her every feature.

"I don't see what you're playing at being a tyrant all of a sudden, for."

David laughed harshly. "I'm not playing at anything, my dear, and you know well enough I'm not a tyrant."

Mrs. Earle moved back her chair, as if she were definitely retiring from any personal part in the discussion.

Her hands were folded in her lap. She gazed from David to Lucia as a disinterested spectator.

"I can't go," said Lucia firmly.

"Well then," returned David, taking a deep breath and squaring his shoulders. "You force me to a very unpleasant necessity. You either go, or else no more money from me this summer . . . See?"

He could not have explained how he had come to say this thing. When he had entered the room with the roses, he had been so far from thought of force or struggle. But here was a question of obscurely revolted and wounded masculine pride.

"Why . . . why, how dare you threaten?" stammered Lucia. "Mother, do you hear that?"

"I hear it," answered Mrs. Earle with affected calm. "But I must not interfere."

Lucia's eyes glittered a nasty blue. She brushed back a soft golden lock of hair that tumbled over her forehead, and sat bolt upright in the bed. The laces fell away from her arms. Her white and gold and blue coloring gave a sudden impression of ice.

"I've never been treated so before."

"Well, you're being treated this way now," retorted David, "and you'd better make up your mind, Lucia, to act as I wish."

"Well, I won't," snapped Lucia disdainfully.

"I'm going now," continued David, forcing his voice to control. "I'm going, and I'll be back this afternoon for your answer, Lucia."

He trod nearer to her: "Kiss me now, like a good little girl."

"Kiss you!" cried Lucia. "After that!"

He turned away sadly. "Very well. You will later when I come back."

He went over to Mrs. Earle. "I'm sorry if I was rude to you, Ma'am."

"Don't mention it," she said frigidly.

Without another word from Lucia, or a move from the older woman, he left the room, walking very straight as a brave man walks who has been hard hit.

He nearly stumbled upon Céline in the dark hall. She was on her knees cleaning the floor, suspiciously near the bedroom door. She scrambled up when she heard his step, and flattened herself against the wall to let him pass.

"Madame is in a temper to-day?" she whispered.

"Yes," he answered dully. He did not look into the salon as he went down the hall. Céline opened the front door for him softly, and he passed out on the way, his arms emptied of roses.

He reached the street and walked out upon it blindly.

He had said this thing to Lucia, that unless she came with him to Italy, he would give her no more money, so therefore he must keep his word.

He crossed the street, and strode towards the Champs Élysées, a frown between his eyes, as he tried to remember how this thing had happened. At first Lucia had been so sweet. There had seemed no question of any anger or problem. Then suddenly she had changed. He wondered why.

He was near the big Avenue now and looked up to see in what direction was the hotel, when a taxi-motor swerved around the corner and glided past him going in the direction from which he had come.

A man was sitting back in the motor. With a sudden gripping clutch at his heart, David recognized this man. It was Ludwig von Lenze.

David stopped short, and wheeled about. He asked himself what business Ludwig von Lenze could have in the rue Washington at half past nine in the morning.

He stood on the edge of the curb straining his neck to watch the back of the motor, as it zigzagged away. He must know where it was going.

It slowed, just as he had known it would do. He could see it pointing in a direct line, and crawling now, as if the chauffeur were hunting for the number. It stopped when it reached the house where Lucia lived.

David was on the opposite side of the street and could not see von Lenze enter the house, but there was no doubt that enter it he did. A morning

stream of traffic chugged and rumbled up and down the narrow street, hiding for a moment sign of the motor and the entrance to the house.

Then David drew a long gasping breath, ducked his head as if he had received a great blow, and recklessly charged across the street. The one impulse in his mind and body was to get back to the house and find the man there.

Horns and whistles and cracking whips were like so many toy sounds in his ears. A heavy delivery wagon drawn by a brawny-muscled horse threaded a lively passage down the street. David in his powerful, onward rush, did not even see it coming. The driver shouted and strained at his reins. There was a second when it seemed to David as if fatality itself were bearing down upon him — a taut breathless second, when the street like a live thing rose and flapped at him. A long thick shaft of the wagon had caught him on the shoulder, shoved him backwards out of reach of the wheels, with such force that he fell smashing his head against the pavement.

Then a crowd came running and surrounded him in a thick, gaping circle.

CHAPTER XXXI

A HUMAN being in the street, becomes a helpless and unlabeled entity, with liberty to race or dawdle on his separate way at his own peril. He may bear a world of secret pain or joy in his heart; his face may be a traced map of what kind of man he is, yet he remains by tacit agreement, a stranger abroad among strangers. At least he remains so, should he steer himself clear of contact with other forces. But he may not reckon with the living or crouching thing around the corner — the enemy who sneers, the blighting accident that strikes him down where he stands. In the former case he must prove himself a philosopher or a man of the world; in the latter case, whatever violent circumstance has laid him low, leaves him flattened and at the mercy of neighbors who pass. They may gape, they may ferret out his name, and his secrets; they may, according to their humanity rob or succor him. For the essential is accomplished, he is down. The means are immaterial, he may be hit by a fallen brick, a horse, a wheel or a thunderbolt. In any case the torrent of life overrides him, causing only an instant of curiosity or charity, to fumble out his name, his profession and to look at the horrid sight of his wound.

David represented at once that arresting thing,—

an accident. Strangers surrounded him, lifted him up, labeled him according to letters found in his pockets, and bore him, as humanity dictated, back to his hotel, which seemed the only home he had.

All this happened in a short space of time.

Merciful chance willed that an old friend should be on the spot when he was needed. Jim Griggs, arrived in Paris the night before, was sitting quietly in the hall of the hotel waiting for David.

When David did come back therefore, and in such doleful manner, there was Jim Griggs to greet him and take charge of affairs.

Now in a few hours, with quiet and prompt action everything was organized for a coming siege. The doctor, a gentle-voiced man with keen eyes and deft fingers, pronounced David in a bad way. There was a fracture of the skull, and congestion of the brain was to be feared. But David was not interested in what had happened to him. The exiled world of the sick room, the nurse, the doctor, all the accessories of illness seemed far removed from him. He wandered alone, in empty space, and vague regions of pain, of ghosts of fear. He softly babbled Lucia's name, as if it were something he wished to remember. Incoherent images of the past, scraps thrown upon a mysterious screen of light and shadow, a flapping of wings that were always flying away, the whir and jar of a disorganized mind, provided him with broken toys with which to play. But when he called Lucia, she eluded him, slipping from his feeble grasp, always slipping just beyond his reach.

Jim Griggs, tender and devoted as a woman, hov-

ered near him, creeping cautiously in and out of the room, and consulting with doctor and nurse, a hundred times a day.

Lucia had been sent for; but she had not come. That was the monstrous incredible truth.

She had sent a note instead, to Jim Griggs, saying that she was very sorry to hear of the accident, and hoped it was nothing serious; but that for private reasons, she could not come to see David. Moreover, she was ill herself, and had been forbidden by the doctor any nervous strain or excitement. She added that she looked forward to seeing Emily Griggs, and remained cordially, His, Lucia Ghent.

Upon the receipt of this letter Jim Griggs swore to such excess as gentlemen are only entitled to do upon very rare occasions. Then he tore the note into bits, telephoned his wife not to expect him until she saw him, and settled in the sick room like a faithful watchdog.

So the old game of life and death was played in grim earnest by David Ghent against invisible adversaries, and days crept by bringing no peace to the shadowy room, or to the troubled spirit of the sick man.

Four weeks passed. David stood there on a thin dividing line between life and void. He had become nothing but a poor shattered creature at the mercy of winds and rain, on the island which was his bed, with deep seas about him.

Then one day, for no particular reason, he opened his eyes and they were lucid, and as if new-born. He saw things which were unfamiliar, but no longer

terrible or ghostly. He saw the nurse moving with felt-like steps around the cautiously shaded room. She was tall and cool-looking in a white apron and cap. He wondered who she was, but felt too weary to ask. He wondered also why she did not have golden hair.

There were no flowers in the room, none of the trimmings of illness. The blinds were drawn, a stillness settled like transparent water, in which David was content to lie.

He was glad to see Jim Griggs creeping forward as comically afraid of proving clumsy as a man who approaches a baby. It did not surprise him to find Jim there. But something was missing, something that was light and air, and health and joy; something that at first he could not shape.

The nurse tiptoed towards him. She was smiling and carried a glass in her hand. He knew then by her smile what was missing. Lucia was not there — she who had eluded him during all his long restless voyage through gray lands. Lucia was not there. He found his voice which sounded dreary and thin like a fine edged sigh:

"Where is Lucia? Where is Lucia?"

Then he remembered that around the thought of Lucia clung like smothering veils, fear and pain. He could not detach the image of her from trouble. The life that was in him was fragile and shivered away from truths. He was afraid of that obscure thing identified with her which would come back to him in his returning strength.

Now, one day, he lay very quietly so that the

nurse should not know that he was awake. He was busy in his mind, like an inexperienced builder, reconstructing a house, and furnishing each of its rooms. There was a room in the garret, that he left bare and locked. Later he would come back to it and put there what was needed, a bare table and a chair. In this room of his mind, he would settle very serious things.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door of the hotel room. It was an urgent, nervous knock.

David listened. He heard the nurse go softly; he heard the rustle of voices, growing from a whisper to louder resonance, then a voice which he recognized — insisting entrance.

With such an effort as he had never given, he raised his head from the pillow and managed to say:

" Seeline — Seeline! "

There was a slight scuffle at the door. The nurse's back was to David. She was protesting in a low angry murmur. But someone thrust her aside and ran into the room.

It was Céline, who evidently laboring under great emotion, stood in the middle of the room waking its resigned stillness to sudden fierce meaning. She stood so for an instant, her face marred and stained by tears. Then catching sight of the wasted figure on the bed, she dashed over, dropped on her knees in a dramatic gesture of prayer,— there was no stopping her, no stemming the current of her uncontrolled quivering nerves.

" Poor Monsieur . . . is it not a shame? . . . I could not come before. But I have wanted to come

and tell Monsieur the truth . . . I cannot longer sleep or eat, until I tell this thing."

The nurse glided forward and touched her imperatively on the shoulder. "Get up. You've done harm enough here already. Don't you see that he's not strong enough to listen to you."

David whispered: "Leave her."

The nurse gave one look at his face and turned away.

"Monsieur must know the truth," sobbed Céline. "Monsieur has always been so good to me. . . . When I heard he was ill, I did cry. Then Madame chased me out. Oh, the wicked woman."

The nurse came forward again. "I really cannot allow this."

But David tried to raise his head upon the pillow, and said: "You must let her speak. What is it, Céline?"

"She is a bad woman. She has treated Monsieur shamefully. I can tell Monsieur."

Céline lowered her voice to a rasping, eager whisper.

Wiping the tears away with one hand, she scrambled to her feet with a sudden stiffening of her tall young body. "Oh, yes, I will tell what I know now," she said grimly.

"You know something of importance?" murmured David.

"Yes, Monsieur."

He motioned to the nurse who came forward quickly, and put an arm under his head as if to support him.

Céline kept wailing: "Poor Monsieur . . . will you look at that — so he is wasted and pale!"

David said to the nurse: "Take her into the next room. Telephone to Mr. Griggs, let her tell him what she has to say . . . sign . . . witnessed."

Then his head fell back; things grew blurred.

He heard Céline talking on and on as if it were the endless murmur of water dripping on a rock.

Then there was complete quiet again.

CHAPTER XXXII

"JIM sees David every day," observed Emily Griggs, and cast an inquisitive sidelong glance at her friend.

Lucia sat back luxuriously in the corner of the automobile. The big feather on her hat brushed against the window. She touched a bunch of yellow and purple velvet pansies pinned to her coat.

" I suppose as much," she answered with the faintest suggestion of acid to her voice.

It was a friend's automobile lent for the afternoon, a large low-bodied closed car, fitted with every luxury which could possibly humor a pretty woman's fancy. There was a little gold vase filled with flowers; there were little boxes with gold tops and mirrors, and an ash-receiver for the stolen whiff at a cigarette, and champagne colored cushions upon which to lean. The chauffeur, trim and immaculate, sat erect, with silhouette of a perfectly trained automaton.

The automobile glided through the Bois this glistening afternoon in June. The grass and trees were of silken green harmony, with light that streamed over all the flowering surfaces, rippling in shine and shadow, cool in the hollows between the foliage. The roads, amber in the afternoon sun, spread away, smooth to the speed of wheels. A

world blossoming in vivid hues, sped by affluent and prosperous.

Emily Griggs and Lucia Ghent, two exquisite young creatures, modern poems of color and line, one boldly dark, the other celestially golden, sat side by side and allowed themselves to be borne skimming over the roads. To look at them, one would think of all that was well appointed, pleasing to the eye, and inoffensively charming. Two little women! beings of grace and ease, gentle products of an indulgent education, sensuously decorative, ingenuous, a trifle vapid of soul, but innocently claiming rank in life as little women.

"How is he now?" inquired Lucia carelessly, speaking of her husband.

Emily Griggs, with the artful glitter of curiosity lurking in her pleasure loving eyes, answered: "Better, I believe! Aren't you going to see him at all, Lucia?"

"Mother thinks I'd better not. It would begin things all over again."

"But what will people say?" questioned her friend, smiling and bowing to a passing acquaintance. "There goes Mme de Landes, Lucia."

"Oh, where? Who was she with?" Lucia bent her head quickly and stared out of the window.

"She's gone now. I didn't see who she was with. What will people say if you don't go to your husband when he's ill?"

"They'll probably guess the truth. I've started hinting to my friends already that the situation is strained between us."

"Poor David!" murmured Emily Griggs, lowering her lashes to a fringe across the blue bruises beneath her eyes.

"Why poor?" retorted his wife, indignantly. "I don't see how you, my friend, can say that. He's been selfish, selfish ever since I married him. I've stood an awful lot from him, I can tell you."

"One always does from husbands," returned Emily Griggs sententiously. "But, my dear, he has no idea, has he, that you are thinking of divorcing him?"

"He needn't have until the time comes," said Lucia calmly. "He never tells me things until the last moment."

"Of course, Jim adores him," murmured Emily. "I never hear anything but 'David, David,' all day long. I really don't see what he's done to you, Lucia."

"Nothing," replied Lucia, with considerable animation. "But it was all a wretched mistake. I was so young when I married. I'd never seen any men."

"You've made up for that since, my dear," observed her friend slyly.

The automobile slid down one of the sheltered alleys of the Bois, and lazed along in the sweet summer air, as if it would never have anything else to do but carry these two little women on their afternoon drive.

"Can anyone blame me?" cried Lucia, her blue eyes wide open and indignant. "I told you how he married me. Mother always said I could do better.

Why, he's left me to myself ever since,— on poor Mother's hands most of the time. Sometimes he wouldn't send me money for months."

"Really? I thought he was very rich."

"So did I," said Lucia, "but it was all bluff. He let me live the way I chose, and one day out of a perfectly clear blue sky told me he was ruined. Speculating too, my dear! That was in San Francisco. You remember the night before I left, he was *drunk!*"

"Well, he was sorry to see you go," returned Emily Griggs in a sympathetic voice, settling herself nearer to her friend, her little wicked red mouth curling upwards.

"Sorry to see me go," sniffed Lucia. "Why did he make it necessary then? Oh, I'm telling everybody the truth now. Mother's advised me to — in *self-protection.*"

"Well?" remarked Emily Griggs, playing with the long lace ruffles which fell about her slender wrist. "He will be surprised, won't he?"

"He'll have to give me alimony," remarked Lucia, tossing her head with a quick willful movement, that gave a stray sunbeam a chance at her hair.

"And then . . ." pursued her friend slowly, the wicked little smile still hovering around her lips. "Then you'll marry again, I suppose."

"What makes you say that?"

Emily Griggs shrugged her shoulders and looked out of the window, at the deep wooded places they were passing, at the sparkle of the blue sky, at all the pleasant well-being of the afternoon.

"Because . . ." suddenly she turned around and looked at Lucia. "Just one little word of advice, my dear. Be careful . . . about that other man."

"*What* do you mean?"

"Don't pretend you're so naïve, Lucia! Von Lenze thinks you're rich. And you don't know anything about him, really . . ."

"I think you're horrid," cried Lucia in a quick flash of temper. "You have no reason to believe . . ."

Emily Griggs laughed. "Come now, my dear . . . entre nous! I've watched you right along. All such things amuse me. You've made something of a fool of yourself over von Lenze, and David is going to pay for it. You know you can never really love the same man for long."

"I'll never speak to you again if you dare say such things."

Emily leaned comfortably against the cushions.

"You never would do that either. You and I can't afford to be bad friends. It's because I'm rather fond of you that I tell you to be careful of von Lenze. He's mighty near to being an adventurer, believe me."

Lucia drew herself up haughtily. "You are absurd to say such things."

"No one else will," continued Emily Griggs, coolly. "I always suspect those slab-faced, narrow shouldered, impassive men, who look as if their faces were cracking when they smile. You're a little fool, Lucia, to have anything to do with men like that."

Lucia had grown white. Her eyes looked bigger

and bluer than ever in the sudden pallor of her face.

"You don't know what you're talking about."

The automobile had turned now and was gliding in long smooth pace back through the Avenue du Bois. Emily bent forward and stared at her friend intently.

"I'd be willing to bet you've compromised yourself in some way with him."

"Nonsense," returned Lucia but in an ill-assured voice.

"Be careful, I say. David's been patient longer than most men, but worms and husbands turn."

Lucia moistened the red of her lips with the tip of her tongue, and put a hand up to her veil. "David," she remarked, her voice shaking with nervous hardly restrained passion. "He'd never turn. He's stupid . . . and *American*."

Her friend smiled wisely. "The American husband, my dear, is the only man on God's earth who would stand a woman like you for two days. But there is always an end to everything."

"You're a nice person to talk! If your husband knew all that you did!" returned Lucia. Suddenly she caught up the speaking tube, and cried through it to the chauffeur: "Home."

"Ah, but he never will!" said Emily softly. "Poor, dear old Jim. I'm too clever, and he's too wise."

The automobile swerved around the Arc de Triomphe. There was a splurge of color on the Champs Élysées. Carriages and motors raced after

one another with a clanging and tooting and rattling of sound.

The two little women sat very straight in the motor, one dark and wicked looking, the other heavenly gold with sad blue eyes. A tension of feminine nerves tried by truths lasted until the automobile dashed up the rue Washington, and stopped in front of Lucia's door.

"Are you coming in for tea, Emily?"

"Is von Lenze going to be there?"

"Yes, he is," snapped Lucia.

"Then," said Emily Griggs comfortably, "I'm not coming in."

"Just as you please." Lucia gathered her belongings, her little leather handbag, her card case, a thick wrap which had slid to the floor, and stepped out of the motor.

"Can he take me home?" asked Emily Griggs indifferently.

"Yes." Lucia, standing on the street, a tall and slender silhouette, gave the chauffeur an address, then forcing herself to smile, she murmured: "Good-by, Emily."

"Au revoir!" cried Emily Griggs. "I'll see you to-morrow at the Castells' tea."

Lucia hurried into the house and Emily watched her with a little spark of malice playing in her eyes.

Then the motor swooped and curved around and skimmed back towards the Champs Élysées.

Ludwig von Lenze was walking lazily down the street. Emily saw him in time to turn her head the other way.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE girl Céline stood waiting until she should be needed. She was crying softly. The door into the sick man's room was ajar. The nurse came and went from one room to another with silent, swift movements. Jim Griggs had been sent for, also the doctor.

Outside, in the hotel hall, there were the discordant sounds of everyday life, muffled to obvious caution as they passed the door, because of David. Sun streamed through the window of the room in which Céline waited. It was the nurse's room and it had an orderly, uninhabited look. Only the few brushes and neat articles on the mantelpiece and a valise near the door revealed sings of occupancy.

At last Jim Griggs arrived, and then the doctor. The nurse came forward and whispered all she knew of the affair, and Céline, still whimpering reiterated her desire to make an important confession concerning David Ghent's wife.

The doctor tiptoed in and looked at David who was lying in a state of coma. Jim Griggs did some telephoning, the result of which was the prompt appearance of a trustworthy girl stenographer and a notary from the American consulate. When everything was ready, and the stenographer had taken the oath of secrecy, Jim Griggs motioned gravely

to Céline who came forward and faced this solemn little group of people, as if she were a prisoner before a court.

"Now," said Jim Griggs, "will you be kind enough, Mademoiselle, to tell us anything you think might be of interest to Mr. Ghent."

The girl looked distressed. "I wish only to see Mr. Ghent," she said.

"Yes, but he is too ill to hear you," replied Jim Griggs quietly. "It is his wish to have you tell us your story, which will be noted down in the proper manner. He will read it when he is strong enough."

"The poor Monsieur!" cried Céline suddenly in the rising accents of exasperated nerves. "I am an honest girl . . . I could no longer stand such dirty things . . ."

"Hush!" admonished Jim Griggs, "you must keep your voice down. Let us come to facts without abuse or comments, Mademoiselle."

The nurse sidled across to the door and glanced in at David who was lying quiet. The stenographer, impassive of face, poised her pencil, and the doctor and notary, a thin sharp looking man, sat attentively looking at Céline.

"Since some time, before I had ever seen Mr. Ghent, and did not know what kind of man he was, I knew that Madame was in love with a M. von Lenze. Ah, mon Dieu!" cried Céline, with a little deprecating shrug of the shoulders. "I have seen many such things in my life. That goes yet! though I never did like M. von Lenze. But Madame and her mother, that old . . ."

"No abuse, please," said Jim Griggs crisply.

Céline's cheeks flushed scarlet, her eyes blazed.

"What would you, Monsieur?" she cried, and looking towards the doctor, suddenly lowered her voice. "Such things turn the blood. They were scheming then against the poor gentleman. M. von Lenze, he want to marry Madame because he think her rich. His own valet, who is my friend, told me so."

"Well, but . . ." said Jim Griggs, "what proof have you of this?"

Céline turned upon him rapidly. "What proof, Monsieur? Wait! I say then they wanted to divorce the poor Monsieur, and get money from him. But when he arrived here in Paris, they were afraid. Oh, Monsieur!" she threw up her hands in jerky, nervous gestures. "There was a time, in the apartment, making that they should not meet."

"Just a moment," interrupted Jim Griggs, "was this gentleman often at the apartment?"

"Always!" cried Céline vehemently. "Madame is crazy about him. He is the master there. He flatter the old lady. She think he has social position in his country, and he think the young Madame has money, and no person has what the other think. That I know."

"Please continue."

"M. Ghent he went to England for two weeks," continued Céline. "Now Madame is a little imbecile — she go off on an automobile trip with M. von Lenze in Brittany, and the old one closes her eyes."

"Wait a moment," Jim Griggs rose from his chair and paced the room. "You say Mrs. Ghent went *away* with this man . . ."

"Yes, yes," cried Céline. "They went away together for three days. The valet was with them. He told me. They went to what you call them . . . little corners in Brittany where nobody see them."

"What proof have you?" Jim Griggs faced the girl and peered at her sternly through his glasses. But she returned his look fearlessly.

"I know every hotel where they stopped, Monsieur. The valet, he hate Madame. He tell me. Monsieur can verify."

"Under what name?"

"Monsieur et Madame von Lenze. Oh, the little fool with such a husband."

"Will you give this young lady a list of those hotels?"

"Here it is already written, Monsieur," Céline produced a worn bit of paper on which was scribbled a few names. The stenographer took the paper, rapidly made the notes. Once a sigh drifted from the next room. The doctor rose and went quickly over to where the nurse stood near the door. David had stirred restlessly, but now lay quiet again.

The notary, with his face trained to indifference, sat very straight, his knees drawn close together, his hands in his lap. He seemed to be examining attentively a flowered pattern on the wall paper.

Jim Griggs pulled at his bushy mustache and resumed his pacing.

"I was sick and revolted," said Céline. "Because Monsieur did not deserve such treatment."

"This is very serious," observed Jim Griggs. "You say you have the names of the hotels?"

"Yes, Monsieur," returned Céline bravely, "and I swear by the Virgin that all I have said is true."

There was a silence. She turned and stared toward the window, her face puckered again in readiness for tears.

Jim Griggs went up to the stenographer: "Make two copies of the paper ready for signature at once. Have you brought a machine?"

"Yes, Sir, I've been given a room downstairs." The stenographer gathered her papers and pencil, and departed.

"It won't take long, Sir," said Jim Griggs to the notary who had slipped out his watch and was surreptitiously consulting it. The nurse and the doctor disappeared together in the sick room. Then Jim Griggs went up to Céline, fumbling in his pocket.

"I am sure," he said in a low voice, "that Monsieur Ghent would wish me to offer you some slight compensation for your honesty — at least until you find another place."

Céline started back with a pained gesture of refusal. "Oh, no, Monsieur, not for that, I pray of you. Monsieur Ghent was always good to me. I do not forget such things."

Jim Griggs stood awkwardly before her, his hand still in his pocket. "Well, you're an honest girl," he said, "an honest girl."

The moments passed slowly in silence pregnant

Soon, however, the
then with a quiet show
signed by Céline, witne
doctor, and the notary st
States seal. Then Célin
and in a mournful wa
pitying look towards the
sieurm," and then went
Presently the others to
left Jim Griggs, the doc
David stirred again ar
of a man dragged back
Then Jim Griggs squared
dier on duty, and trod to h
David opened his eyes:
"Yes, David."
"Has she . . . gone?"
fully in a whisper.
"Yes, David."
don't know what

denly drawing a long breath, as if he were going to plunge into cold water, he sat down beside David. Hsi voice sounded too loud and harsh for the room. "Look here, Davy, not that it means anything, but have you made your will?"

"No," answered David. "But that's understood. I leave everything to my wife."

Jim Griggs rose abruptly and cleared his throat, glancing over at the nurse who stood in the doorway discreet but watchful. She shook her head, as if she caught the question in his face.

In the dim light of the room, this loyal friend looked like an old grief-stricken man. His shoulders drooped, his chin sank forward; he put a hand on the back of the chair as if to steady himself.

"I don't think you'd better do that, Davy . . . I don't think you'd better leave everything to her," he said very slowly.

David, with visible effort, calling upon all the vestige of will and strength left in his weary body, asked: "Why?"

Then Jim Griggs, with a hand that trembled, reached in his pocket and drew forth one of the papers that contained Céline's confession.

"I swear I don't know whether I'm being cruel or kind, David," he said in a low voice. "But I love you, and . . . and I think you ought to see this right away."

David put out a white, thin hand for the paper. The nurse came forward quickly. The doctor, who had been in the next room, appeared in the doorway.

"Is he strong enough?" whispered Jim Griggs

to the doctor who shrugged his shoulders, and replied: "I'm afraid he isn't."

The nurse gently drew the curtains aside. A thin, yellow ray of light stole into the room, and fell unfamiliarly on David's pale face, who with a flicker of his old humor, still holding the paper, turned to Jim Griggs: "I must look like a Thanksgiving turkey," he said.

The nurse brought him something fortifying to drink, and putting a gentle arm under his neck propped him up so that he could read. Her eyes were calm and steady. She seemed to be looking beyond him.

Jim Griggs, shriveled of face and sad, turned away as if he could not bear to look. Then David read with eyes that were dim from weakness.

There was not a sound. Only once the paper crackled like a tiny dead leaf being crushed under foot.

After what seemed a long, long while, he dropped the paper from a nerveless hand, and his head sank back on the nurse's arm.

"Forgive me for showing it to you, David. I . . . I thought you ought to know," said Jim Griggs brokenly.

"I'll be damned if I die now!" cried David suddenly, his voice quavering thin and high. The nurse, the doctor and Jim Griggs turned towards the bed, in quick, relieved surprise. David's eyes shone with small fierce fires. He looked at them all three, stiffening his body in a great effort of reaction. "It would be too easy for her," he went on.

Jim Griggs came over swiftly and seized his hand in a bear-like grip. "Good for you, old boy, good for you!"

David smiled wanly, and looked at the doctor, who was standing at the foot of the bed. "Doc, I want to get well mighty quick."

"Then you will," answered the doctor heartily.

Then David turned again towards his friend. "You send to every hotel on that list and get affidavits of the truth of those statements."

"I will do that," said Jim Griggs.

"Now everyone leave me." All of a sudden he yielded to complete exhaustion, and sank back among the pillows, his eyes closed, his body limp under the sheets.

Jim Griggs tiptoed away. Only the nurse hovered in the shadow, while David slept like a child.

CHAPTER XXXIV

LACK of imagination concerning the hereafter is what keeps many a man alive, coping rather with familiar tragedies that bear his image, than with vague possibilities of reward or punishment lying beyond his vision.

David, with renewed will, struggled valiantly to regain his strength. The shock of treachery, the definite wound to his illusions, had smashed through his inertia, aroused his manhood, challenged all the raw pain and vanity of his outraged being.

As obedient as a little child, under the orders of the doctor he ate, drank, slept, and surrendered his body to the slow animal process of recovering health. But with health came tragic power of thought.

He would lie by the hour, his eyes closed, his fists clenched, thinking of this monstrous thing, this betrayal of all in which he had once believed. Now Lucia's face, as it flashed across the long nights of his convalescence, was uglier than he had ever imagined the face of a woman could be. But he held it in thought before him, sternly, as one looks at a scarred thing, which has once been beautiful.

Jim Griggs came every day and sat by his friend's side, watching him with unwearied wistful care. He never once questioned or sought to know what dwelt in David's heart. Nor did David speak of this.

It was July, a time of withering heat, when Paris blistered beneath torrid blue skies, trailed its gay life to the fringe of summer. Jim Griggs had uncomplainingly given up an automobile tour in Spain, which he had planned the winter before. His wife Emily, had flown to Marienbad and back again for a short courageous siege at the dressmaker's, in preparation for a month at Deauville.

The day came when David was ready. He had trained himself like an athlete for this day. He had risen and walked first, leaning on the faithful Jim Griggs' arm, then he had driven out in the warm sweet air of the sunny afternoons. Next he walked unaided.

With his returning strength came sharpened realization of what awaited him — the meeting with Lucia, his wife. In this no one could help him, no one could counsel. He must face a readjustment of broken fragments and build therefrom what was to be between them.

Lucia was still in Paris. He had learned this from Jim Griggs who had added soberly: "I think you ought to know, Davy, that there's gossip. She's getting talked about."

David set his face in iron lines of control. "Well, thank you, Jim."

One afternoon, being ready and strong enough, he put in his pocket a copy of the confession signed by Céline and went to find his wife.

A strange man-servant opened the door. He did not smile at David as Céline always had done. The white hall with its secretive doors, the old rose and

gold salon into which David was ushered, seemed unfamiliar, as if he had never been in the place before, as if he were in a dream.

The door of the salon closed gently upon him. A clock somewhere in space outside struck three deep tones.

He walked straight to the piano, where stood the photograph of Ludwig von Lenze. He did not even stop to look at it, but suddenly seized it, raised it high over his head and whirled it down with a swift impetus of arms.

It crashed on the polished floor with a hollow ringing sound from the silver frame, and a tinkle of broken glass. The photograph lay face downwards.

The violence of this act whipped David's spirit to a fierce consciousness of strength. He looked around him swiftly and had he found some other thing which he would have been justified in breaking, he would have done so then and there, so keen was the awakened lust of destruction.

He waited for Lucia now, in spite of his weakness pacing the floor, his hands behind his back, as if to keep them from further mischief. Presently the door opened and she came into the room. She was dressed in an embroidered white linen gown that fell in straight, pure folds from her shoulders. She looked like a fair young girl.

When she saw David she stopped short, just the fraction of a moment, then continued her gentle advance, as if she were welcoming a casual visitor.

"Why, David . . ." she began. Her eyes followed the direction of his voluntary gaze, and she

saw the photograph lying in the middle of the floor, with bits of glass scattered shiningly on the rug. She stood staring. Then with a sudden gesture she stooped as if to pick it up.

"Leave that!" His voice rang in such crisp unaccustomed command, that she righted herself to obedience. "What do you mean?" Her voice was ill-assured.

Without answering David drew from his pocket the paper and handed it to her. "It's a copy, so it won't help to tear it," he said briefly.

She took it with long, thin fingers, that handled it delicately as if she were afraid. Then she read, standing very tall and slim, and quiet.

David, watching her, wondered how he had ever thought her a child, or beautiful. Stripped of illusion and faith, she seemed to him now nothing but silhouette, nothing but golden hair, treacherously cold eyes, and thin lips.

When she had finished reading, without a word of comment, she flung the paper on the floor beside the photograph and ran out of the room, slamming the door.

He stared after her, but made no move to follow. Instead, he took out his cigarette case, carefully chose a cigarette and lit it. His hand was steady.

In a few moments she came back. Her eyes glittered; her cheeks flashed banners of scarlet. She advanced slowly towards David who did not move.

"It's a lie," she said.

David straightened himself, threw the cigarette in the grate and faced her.

"I think not."

He was watching her now almost with curiosity, wondering how she would explain the thing away, in what intricate manner she would attempt to crawl from the honesty of the situation.

"It's a game you've put up against me." Her voice, in spite of an attempt at control, slid up, half a key, warning the approach of nerves.

"It's not a lie, and it's no game," said David. "You know it. Why not, for once, play square?"

She walked swiftly over to him and he saw that she was trembling. Her voice mounted thinly. "You cad!" she said. "You cad, to come here with such a thing! I dismissed that girl from my service. It's a vulgar case of a servant's vengeance."

"Now look here, Lucia, there is no use handing me that talk. The thing's true, you know it and I know it. The question is what I'm going to do about it."

"It isn't true."

"Oh, Lord!" said David wearily. "Whatever's the use of lying! You've done nothing else ever since you married me. I tell you that I have affidavits from every one of those hotels where you stopped with your . . . with that dirty hound."

"You . . . you did that!"

"Yes, I did."

"You cad!" she said again, slowly lingering over the word.

"Be careful how you sling language about," he said. "You make me clean sick — do you hear *me?* I never knew there could be such a woman as

you." He leaned against the back of a chair. Weakness was returning to his knees, and such a crushing disgust had come into his soul that he could hardly look at her. "If you want to know — I'm clean disgusted. I've spent the best part of my life slaving for you . . . to give you everything. What have I got for it? Lies, lies, lies and deceit."

"You never understood me."

"Understood you!" he sneered. "Oh, Lord! If I had . . . do you think I'd be here now?" He passed his hand wearily over his forehead. "No! such women as you . . . why, it's enough to make a man put a bullet in his brains, just to forget."

"David, I swear . . ."

"Don't swear to me. You've done that once before."

He bent, picked up the paper and put it in his pocket.

"What are you going to do with that?" she whispered, edging near him.

"I don't know yet," he answered slowly; "I don't know what I'll do. You've made such an everlasting mess of things."

"Give it to me." She made a dash for him, but he caught her wrist and held it in a grip of iron. "Quit that!" he said roughly.

"David!" she whimpered. Suddenly she sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands.

He stood looking at her without pity or anger.

"It isn't fair," she mumbled.

"No, it isn't," he agreed.

"*You ought to* know it's a lie."

"Oh, what's the use?" he said and walked across the room to the door.

She flew from the chair across to him, and clung to his arm. "Wait, don't go, I'm going to tell you the truth."

He stood still, his arms limp at his sides.

She faced him, agitated, and trembling like a wild thing at bay. "I love Ludwig von Lenze," she said.

"Love!"

"Yes, I do, David. I swear I do. He wants to marry me. Now that it's all over between you and me, why not?"

"Yes," said David dully, "yes, it's all over between you and me."

"Oh, be generous!" she cried, "be generous, David. You see how fair I am. I tell you I love him . . . If you'll only let me divorce you."

"You divorce me!"

"Why, yes!" she spoke in a hurried, eager whisper. "He and I can be married. It will be better for you, too. I know I've never made you happy."

"And what about money?" He sat down in a chair by the door suddenly too weary to stand.

An instant of confusion flickered across her face. "I know you'll be generous," she repeated.

He looked at her in silence. He felt detached and a stranger to all she was saying, vaguely amused at the colossal confidence and lack of shame in the way she had twisted the situation to suit her plans.

"So," he said at last slowly, "I'm to let you

divorce me and give you money to do it, and offer you my blessing besides. Why should I?"

She flung her hands out in a gesture of appeal. "Because you don't love me any more."

"Don't I?" he looked at her thoughtfully. "Suppose I did."

"Why . . . why . . . I don't know," her voice trailed away. "Do you, David?"

"No," he said with sudden brutality.

"Then you will consent to the divorce?" she cried. She was standing near the piano, her hands spread like little wings on the edge of it. His mother's worn wedding ring which he had never replaced, shone on her finger.

"You will then? It's the decent thing to do."

"Is it now?" David showed a detached interest in the question. "And will you tell me why?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Because . . ."

He interrupted her. "Because," he said, "of all the dirty scandals! All the women like you who want comfortably to change husbands, think they can depend on the unfailing chivalry of men to put themselves in the wrong. Don't you know that the man who is divorced under the circumstances which I'm in, is pointed at and sneered at? Don't you know that he loses caste among men?"

"Nonsense," cried Lucia pettishly.

"He's known as an easy thing, as a husband who's served as a puppet."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Lucia. "People divorce every day."

"Oh, yes," replied David bitterly. "It's done in the best families. But not all of them are placed as we are. You've never once been fair to me. I don't even believe you love the other man. You couldn't love anybody. You've made a fool of me, and now I'm to bow and grin and get out. What do you think of that — why, if things were fair — I'd divorce you."

"Oh, you'd never do *that!*"

"Never — why?"

"Because, no man would. It's ruin for the woman."

"Wouldn't your man marry you under those circumstances?"

"No, of course he wouldn't," she confessed. Then she stopped short and wheeled away from him so that he should not see her expression.

"It's a pretty society," he remarked as if he were thinking aloud.

There was another short silence. Then he inquired politely:

"And how do you think you'd divorce me? and for what reason?"

She played nervously with the lace at her throat. "It would be so simple and easy in New York," she murmured. "It's much the quickest way."

David bounded from his chair, every nerve tingling in revolt. "You'd ask that of me? Do you know what it means to be divorced in New York?"

"Yes, I've looked it up. It's only a matter of form." She turned defiantly. "Lots of nice men

have done it before you. It's really no disgrace."

"Well, that's the limit!" cried David. "So you want to divorce me in New York."

"I don't see why not. Any other takes months now in America and I couldn't go and live in queer places for months."

He strode up and down the room, kicking the photograph aside.

"Anything, anything to get rid of me. Oh, it's fine!" He laughed mirthlessly. "Oh, no, such a divorce doesn't matter for a man! Oh, no, people don't look sideways at him, his business doesn't suffer." He stopped in front of her. "You've got the nerve of a bounder," he said.

"I won't answer your insults," she retorted passionately. "I told you the best way and if you think it over, I'm sure you'll see."

"Why not, after all?" he agreed with sudden recklessness. "Why not?"

He went over to her, took her by the shoulder and looked deep into her eyes. "You love this man?"

Her eyes were cold and unbetraying blue. "Yes," she said.

He released her, took up his hat which lay on the piano, and started for the door. "I'll think it over," he said.

He had not realized how tired he was. The paper in his pocket weighed like a dead thing, as once before the revolver had done.

"I guess I'm a damned fool," he murmured as he reached the street, and turned towards his hotel.

CHAPTER XXXV

HE thought that after all he had been very magnanimous,— a generous fool, in fact, who deserved at least credit for the decent way he was acting in such a painful affair. All his life he had tried to be honest and kind to men and women. His vision had been clean, his faith obstinate. This was the result. He had lost illusions and hope. He had wished to be a good American citizen, a loving husband, a man of force and integrity in his dealings with other men. He felt that he had failed. He had failed to found a home and to keep his wife. The veils wrenched from his eyes, he saw what he had been as a husband, as a man, summed up under one head — an unrebellious money-machine. The filth of the divorce his wife had dared to propose meant ironically enough a trivial ending to the sordid affair. It was for him a last surrender, so that she might sweep on uncondemned.

He reached the hotel and walked like an old man towards the elevator. He would go up alone to his room. Beyond that he saw nothing.

Someone called to him in a jovial, healthy voice that was like a suddenly opened window in a stale sickroom. It was a voice that took no account of inner tragedies, or miry problems, or treachery and lies.

David turned to find himself face to face with an acquaintance whom he had not seen since the first happy months in San Francisco, when the future had seemed so brilliant and hopeful. Joseph Roley was rubicund and stout, with the infectious laugh of a fat man. He was unfeignedly delighted to see David. "Why, Mr. Ghent," he cried, "I'm mighty glad to find you here, sir."

"Hello, Mr. Roley," answered David, forcing warmth into his voice and expression.

Joseph Roley had known and heard of David as an important rising force in the mining world. His greeting was the more eager, tinged with deference due to supposed success.

"My wife and daughter are over there having tea." He jerked his thumb towards the big hall. "I'd be very happy to have them meet you, Mr. Ghent."

David, in sudden wistful relief at any interruption to his somber mood, allowed himself to be drawn into the cordial wholesome atmosphere of this unsuspecting fellow. Joseph Roley had come from another world, a world indeed which poor, bruised-hearted David could understand.

"I'd like to meet your wife," he answered gratefully, and accordingly walked along beside Joseph Roley, who kept saying:

"Well, who'd have thought! The world is indeed a small place, Mr. Ghent."

In a corner of the big hall, which at this end of season was meagerly filled with groups of languid people, sat Mrs. Roley and her daughter.

As soon as David saw them, he felt that he had always known them. They were as incongruous in the indifferent pretentious hotel atmosphere, as he David had always been. There was something comfortable and homely and domestic about this mother and daughter — something which suggested a fireside, a green-shaded lamp, home-made food and motherly welcome. They were not dressed like the women around them, although Mrs. Roley obviously wore a new hat — a stiff respectable affair, with a shiny bow of ribbon and an unyielding brim, a hat which was perched at a rigid angle on her gray hair, evidently just as the saleswoman had placed it.

But the hat did not matter, nor detract from its wearer, who was a bright-eyed, energetic merry little woman. The daughter was a fine looking, quiet girl, with thoughtful brown eyes like those of a faithful dog. Those eyes in a strange way soothed and comforted David as soon as he looked into them. They were so different from the blue ones he had known, and once thought candid and young.

She and her mother seemed on the close affectionate terms of sisters. They welcomed David with simple hospitality which contained no self-consciousness.

He sat down beside them, feeling suddenly as if he were entering a home.

" It's mighty nice to meet an American," said Mrs. Roley, pronouncing the word " Amurrican." " This is our first trip over. We wanted to give Dorothy the advantage of travel, as soon as she'd finished her

schooling. We'd promised the child," she smiled confidentially at David.

"Yes," said the daughter in a slow, sweet drawl. "It's a great treat for me," and she looked at her mother, with devoted brown eyes.

"This is my first trip too," confessed David. But there was no joy in his voice.

"Dear me. Is that so?" exclaimed Mrs. Roley, sympathetically. "Paris is just wonderful, isn't it? I suppose you've seen all the sights?"

"No," said David. "No, I haven't."

"You don't say! Well, we've been here a day, and we've driven all over in one of those Cook's wagons."

"I think Napoleon's tomb is grand!" cried the daughter, as if she were even then evoking a rapturous image of all she had seen.

"Here, Mother," said Mr. Roley fussily. "We haven't asked Mr. Ghent what he would have to drink."

The little woman turned a distressed motherly face to David. "Well, if I'm not rude!" she declared. "Won't you have some tea, Mr. Ghent?"

"Thank you," answered David. "I don't think I want anything." He felt as if a quieting hand were being laid on his head; these good people would never know how much this chance meeting with them had meant to him in his loneliness.

"We think Paris is a fine town," remarked Mr. Roley comfortably. "Don't we, Dorrie?"

"Yes, indeed, father."

"You ought to trot around with us a bit. Dorrie,

my girl's a first-rate guide. She's studied up all these things. I guess there's very little she doesn't know."

"Now, Father!" protested the girl, and turning brightly to David, she added: "They make out I know more than I do. I feel awfully ignorant over here with all these beautiful things."

A wistful look came into her young face. David recognized this look with a quick sympathetic thrill. "I know," he said.

"Dorothy's a mighty smart girl," insisted her father. "She took all the prizes at school."

Now David allowed himself gently to be drawn into the warmth of this little circle, as a weary traveler who accepts refreshments from the charitable inhabitants of a fruitful land.

But as he sat there listening to the language he could understand, his eyes caught the look of a blonde over-dressed woman sitting ostentatiously alone at one of the nearby tables. She had with her a little dog who trotted with promiscuous freedom around the hall, and stopped hungrily wherever it suspected the presence of food. Should a chance man stoop to pet the dog, the blond woman would bridle and prepare an indulgent smile. David had petted the dog; therefore the blond woman smiled at him expectantly. He hated the smile because, somehow, it brought back to him a realization of all that he most wished to forget. A rapacious vulgarity lurked just outside the innocent circle of this kind, unsophisticated Roley family. David would have wished fiercely to protect them from knowledge or contact with the

ugly, slimy things he had come to know. Suddenly he felt himself unworthy to be with them, to be talking to the young girl. The time was very near when people like the Roleys might not wish to know him, and they were the only kind of friends he wanted to have. This was Lucia's fault, too. Because of her, because of the unsavory situation into which she was forcing him, he would have to forego the companionship of such young girls as Dorothy Roley. So spoke his conscience sternly. He was, however, glad to know that there were people like the Roleys in the world. Once he had imagined that Lucia was so, now searching deep in Dorothy Roley's eyes, he knew that Lucia had never been really young and pure.

"We're going to Venice," Mrs. Roley was saying. "I'm crazy to see Venice."

"So am I," agreed David soberly.

Just then Mrs. Roley saw a woman come into the hall wearing a pretty coat. She leaned forward excitedly and twitched at her daughter's arm. "Look dearie, isn't that like the coat I bought for you at the Galeries?"

The daughter turned and stared. "It isn't the same cut, but it's the same stuff," she said.

"Women will talk clothes in Paris," chuckled Mr. Roley, winking at David.

"So I believe," replied David, and looked up wearily to see Jim Griggs standing in the door signaling to him.

He rose with an effort. It cost him a great deal to break the tender comfort of this little moment.

As he took Mrs. Roley's hand in his, he looked at her sadly. "I must go. Good-by, Ma'am. It's been a great pleasure meeting you."

"We've enjoyed it, Mr. Ghent," she returned heartily.

"Oh, this isn't good-by," cried her husband. "We'd be delighted if you'd dine with us some night, Mr. Ghent."

"Yes, do!" urged the daughter, looking at him with friendly eyes.

"I . . . I'd love to . . . but . . ." stammered David.

"Lord, I'm stupid!" exclaimed Mr. Roley. "Probably your wife's here. Of course we'd be delighted to have her too."

"Thank you," said David quietly. "But she hasn't been well, and . . ."

"Well, then, if you can't before we leave, don't forget us when you come to Chicago. We're living there now. Here's my card." Joseph Roley fumbled in his pocket. His wife beamed at David and echoed:

"Yes, don't forget."

But David was looking at the girl and wondering if he might ever see her again. Somehow through all the film of his misery he felt that he would see her again.

"Mind you look us up, Mr. Ghent," she said in a gentle playful manner, and gave him her hand with the frank gesture of a boy.

"I'll try to," promised David.

He left them with the feeling that the door of a

cozy sweet room was closing behind him, a room in which he had spent a stolen moment; but a room in which he belonged.

Jim Griggs was wrestling with a refractory match, a big unlit cigar in his mouth.

"Hello, Jim," said David, coming up behind him.

"Hello, Davy. Well! have you seen her?"

"Yes," answered David gravely. "I've seen her."

Jim Griggs took his friend by the arm and steered him towards the big side door of the hotel. "Let's get out of here, in the air. Then we'll talk it over," he said.

So David allowed himself to be led away. But he wished he could have stayed just a little while longer with the Roley family.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE two men walked in silence, with the same stride, down the Champs Élysées. A late afternoon ripened beneath the glory of a setting sun. The Arc de Triomphe loomed an apotheosis, framing a wide-hued orange-hearted sea. The world of the West seemed on fire. There was an influence in the hour of benign quiet.

Only once Jim Griggs spoke: "Been pretty hot to-day."

"Yes, it has," agreed David.

They passed the Petit Palais and the Grand Palais, blue of silhouette in the still air, behind which flamed the gilded Victories, gold against a blue sky. The chestnut trees smelt poignantly. Carriages and motors lounged up and down the avenue. No one seemed in a hurry.

They came to the Place de la Concorde, which spread away smoothly in trailing purple shadows. Beyond, the windows of the Louvre, lanced and wounded by the sun, burned blood red as if in last defiance of monarchic splendor.

The Avenue des Champs Élysées, a wide pathway to the dying sun, was shrouded in gray and gold dust. From the Place de la Concorde, the Arc de Triomphe looked like the ghostly gate of the world.

[illegible] Griggs and David crossed the Place slowly

and entered the Tuileries gardens, which closed around them cool and dim, with alleys that led away. The fountain stained scarlet sprayed gently. Its mirror-like pool was pensive and mysterious, as contemplation itself in which trees and sky are reflected. A small boy leaned far over the basin and watched a tiny boat with a red sail, float. Couples walked slowly, always away towards the shadows.

The two friends, caught by the magic of the moment, paced beneath the trees.

At last Jim Griggs spoke, as if reluctantly.

"Well?"

"Well!" answered David. They went along without looking at one another. Jim Griggs held his hands clasped behind his back, and walked with drooping shoulders and preoccupied face, "Well," said David, kicking pebbles from his path. "It's all over but the funeral."

"You've told her then?"

"Yes."

"I suppose she'll go to Reno," observed Jim Griggs in a detached voice.

David gave a short laugh. "Reno! Nothing! She wants to divorce me in New York — you know what that means!"

Jim Griggs bounded as if he had been touched by something unclean. His face suddenly apoplectic stared at David from the shadows. "She dared suggest such a low-down thing? And you?"

No one was in sight or hearing. The two men faced one another. David waved his hand in a little hopeless gesture. "It's rotten of course," he

said. "But then the whole thing is rotten. And . . . I guess I've lost my grip."

"No, by heaven! You shan't do that!" cried the older man, in sudden violence. Then sobering his voice, he laid a hand on David's arm. "Not that!"

David met his friend's gaze steadily. "That or another way," he said. "Jim, old man, old pal, it's nasty business anyway. I've been a fool and made a mess of things."

"Why not divorce *her?* You've got all your proofs," asked Jim Griggs in a harsh voice.

"Oh, I couldn't do that!" answered David quickly. "I couldn't drag any woman through *that.*"

"Couldn't you? Come over here, Dave, I want to talk to you seriously."

Jim Griggs, a short bowed figure, led the way to a stone bench beneath a tree. Gray mist thickened and enveloped them, softening their outlines. David followed, with no spring to his steps. His mind was curiously clear and sentient. The stone bench reminded him of long ago, of his boyhood and the tranquil scented garden. He sat down and prepared to listen, but not as he had once listened to his grandmother Arnold. The look of a young dog had gone from his eyes. There were lines of weariness in his face.

"Now," said Jim Griggs after a moment of heavy reflection, "now, David, I'm older than you, and I know a bit more of the world and its ways. I'm talking to you as a father might."

"I know it, Jim," replied David affectionately.

"But there's not much to say. She won't go to Reno or anywhere else for the proper time. I can't do it. My business wouldn't allow me to. Besides, she's bound to have her way. I dare say a divorce can be trumped up in New York."

"If you do that, you'll ruin yourself socially and in a business way," said Jim Griggs.

David shrugged his shoulders and dug his hands deep in his pockets. Unconsciously he adopted his wife's argument. "Not necessarily. Many a man has done it before."

"Not under these circumstances," cried Jim Griggs.

David looked up at his friend. "What circumstances?"

"David, there have been many things . . . we haven't discussed before, but that I've understood," said the older man slowly. "I'm married too . . . and I've had my problems. I'm not as stupid and blind . . . as people think." His face twisted to a bitterness of which David had never suspected him capable. "But I was like you . . . Until too late. Now I'm old and . . . well, life is behind me. But you're young."

"Not so young," murmured David.

"Yes, you're young. You have things before you. You can still work and hope to make a home."

David thought of the Roley family, of the girl with the fine brown eyes, and the handclasp of a boy. He smiled wryly. "I guess not."

"You can," persisted Jim Griggs, staring away through the trees to the gathering dusk.

A couple passed them brushing by, as if the two men were shadows. The girl leaned amorously on the arm of her lover! She was looking up at him, her face mobile and shamelessly adoring. They were whispering, one to the other.

"The question is," said Jim Griggs slowly, when they had drifted away, "the question is, how much does a man owe himself and the other men who respect him? How much right has a woman to destroy a man's self-respect?"

"I've always thought that men must protect women at any cost," said David in a low voice.

"It depends! Some women forfeit all claims."

There was a silence. David stirred restlessly.

"You wouldn't want men, your friends, to refuse to shake hands with you?"

"You bet I wouldn't," cried David energetically.

"You're a man for all men and one woman?" said Jim Griggs gravely. "You haven't found that woman yet. And yet you're giving up the game already."

David's head sank on his chest, his shoulders drooped. "I'm not giving up the game."

"Yes, you are. David, do you realize what's being said about you?"

"Said about me? Probably that I'm a darned fool."

"Worse than that."

David stiffened and sat erect.

"Worse than that! I don't understand."

"No you don't understand," said Jim Griggs care-

fully. "But you're going to. And if you strike me dead for it, I'm going to tell you."

David frowned and set his lips in a straight line. "Go ahead."

Jim Griggs looked away. "There are nasty stories circulating around about you."

"The hell there are!" exclaimed David. He was tense and alert now; his gray eyes had kindled.

"It's being said," continued Jim Griggs steadily, "it's being said that you've deserted your wife, left her without money; that you drink . . . and that you know certain things, and have known them, and that .... you've closed your eyes to them."

David leaped to his feet like lightning. He was trembling; he clenched his hands, so that the nails dug into the palms. "By God! Who's the dirty skunk who's dared . . ." He faced the older man, glaring at him fiercely, as if he too were an enemy.

"You're wife started those stories while you were sick — she and her lover. She was preparing people for the divorce in New York, so that everyone would think you to blame."

"She . . . Lucia!" groaned David. "Oh, Lord!"

Jim Griggs lowered his eyes and rising from the bench, laid a hand that trembled on David's shoulder. "You see!" he said in a voice as gentle as a woman's.

David buried his face in his hands and stood so for just a moment, in the shadow. Then his hands dropped like limp things and he turned a haggard mask to his friend.

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to me — I was gener
her! I was going to
who has never harmed
all my life! Oh, wl
paced up and down in
keeping step beside it.

"But it shan't be!"
old man, you've done m
see it all now. I see t
damn them!"

"David! David!"

He flung his arms
trolled anger. "Yes,
last. I've stood all
wheeled about. "How

"My wife's told me

ridden over, right along. But not the Almighty himself can budge me now. No more pity, no more nonsense."

"What are you going to do?"

David stopped his restless walking. "What am I going to do? Stop being an easy thing to begin with. There's only one way to do . . . it's to divorce her."

"Are you serious?"

"I'm serious all right. After all it's only fair. Such women as she ought to be branded. They're dangerous."

Jim Griggs sighed and shook his head. "What a pity!"

"Yes, it's a pity. It's a pity too that I ever met her or married her, that I've wasted faith and heart on her. But now it's finished."

David strode towards the gate of the garden. The small boy had gone, taking with him the tiny boat with the red sail. The windows of the Louvre had burned out and were ashen color. Only a faint streak of pink sailed behind the Arc de Triomphe. Shadows lengthened and a necklace of lights led away up the Champs Élysées.

"I'm going to her now, this minute, to tell her what she can expect."

When they reached the Place de la Concorde, David turned to his friend. "I loved her so, Jim; no woman has ever been loved more." There was a sob in his voice.

An empty motor drove by slowly. David hailed it.

"Can I take you anywhere first?" he asked Jim.

"No thanks, Davy. Guess I'll walk."

David held out his hand. "Jim, there's not much I can say to you. But I won't forget in a hurry what you've done for me to-day."

Jim Griggs put his hand in David's. "I tried to do for the best. If you hadn't told me about that New York business I'd never have said anything."

"Good-by, Jim. See you later."

"Good-by, David, hold on to yourself."

David sprang into the motor, slamming the door with a quick, decisive motion, and was off.

Jim Griggs stood watching the motor swerve about like a bird taking flight. He watched until it became just a dark blot skimming up the Champs Élysées.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"MADAME is dressing for the theater," said the impassive man who opened the door.

"Madame will see me," returned David peremptorily, and walked unbidden into the empty salon.

The man, cat footed, trod across the floor and clicked on the electricity. The light shone then keyed to a soft glow by big rose-colored shades that looked like flowers. But the room was not cordial. It had a deserted unprepared atmosphere. David stood by the closed piano and waited, an erect forceful figure, with eyes that were cold and gray as ice, and a mouth closed like a steel trap. He did not wait long. Almost at once, Lucia trailed swiftly into the room. Her gown of old gold brocade sheathed her tall slender figure, and tapered to a pointed train. Her wheat colored hair piled high, framed softly eyes that were light blue and astonished. In the foamy material at her breast she wore a great sapphire that looked like a pool in moonshine. She shut the door of the room and came forward swaying slightly, with the walk David once had loved.

"You seem fond of turning up when you're not expected," she said.

"I never am expected," replied David coldly.

"I am sorry, I have to go to the theater in a few

moments." She appeared to hesitate, then sank with a graceful droop of shoulders, in one of the gilt and old-rose chairs. "Won't you sit down?"

"No thanks." He remained standing, a trifle awkwardly but with a solid firmness of pose which suggested inflexible decision. "I won't take much of your time," he said carefully. There was about him at this moment, a great simplicity and directness, a sense of mastery that seemed to weigh down the gold and pink room, fusing and concentrating it to a central force, which was himself.

"This is what I have come to tell you," his voice was businesslike. "Since I left you this afternoon, certain facts have come to my knowledge which have completely changed my attitude towards you."

"Will you explain what they are?" She did not take her eyes from him, and only her long thin fingers tapping against a carved garland of roses on the arm of the chair, betrayed signs of impatient agitation. He noticed that she no longer wore her wedding ring and made up his mind to claim it back again. "Now, Lucia," he said, "I was playing fair when I practically promised this afternoon that I'd let you divorce under the degrading terms you proposed. I was sacrificing myself for the last time to your colossal selfishness. But I didn't know then just how far you had gone, just how treacherous you were." He spoke carefully and as if with complete detachment.

"You talk in riddles," she murmured.

He strode nearer to her chair. "You and your lover might have thought twice before trying to

blacken my name and my honor behind my back," he said sternly.

"I haven't the least idea what you mean. Who ever told you such things?" she demanded with a show of indignant surprise.

"Never you mind who told me. But I know well enough that you and he have circulated defaming reports concerning me which make it necessary for me to disprove them at once. I've stood a great deal. I won't stand any more. . . . Now you have it."

She rose quickly from her chair. "We . . . I've never said a thing!" she cried.

"There's no use denying it."

"But I assure you, David. Be more explicit at least. Tell me what you've heard." Her eyes and shoulders and hands expressed injured innocence.

"Well," he began slowly, "it's being said that I left you without money . . . is that so? . . . that I drink and that I've been an obligingly blind husband. Nice things to have repeated about a man, aren't they?"

"It isn't so," she protested.

He came up to her and stood challengingly, staring deep into her eyes, as if he were trying to find in them the truth. She met his gaze with reluctant defiance. She had grown very pale.

"You lie," he said, and wheeled abruptly from her.

"David, don't be so brutal!" She followed him across the room with fleet steps, and laid an icy cold hand on his. "I've never said any such things."

He submitted to her touch but remained cold and

unmoved. "I don't believe you, Lucia," he said. "I'll never believe you again. You've thrust every sentiment of love and respect from my heart."

She flung from him. "Believe it or not then, as you choose." He looked at her coolly. "I'm going to do everything I choose hereafter."

"You are?" There was covert taunt in her manner, to which he paid no attention.

"I'm going to begin by refusing to let you make a fool of me. I refuse under the circumstances, to let you divorce me in New York. I refuse to lend myself to your intrigues. You hear me?"

"You won't let me get my divorce?"

"No, by heaven, I won't," he cried suddenly violent. Then lowering his voice to immediate control. "I'm going to treat you as you deserve, as every woman like you deserves to be treated by the men they have deceived and lied to. There's got to be some difference established, even in chivalry, between a woman like you and a decent woman."

"Don't talk to me like that!" She drew herself up in feline pose, as if she were defending a brood of young.

"You might as well know the truth at once," he said gravely. "I've decided to divorce you."

"Divorce me?" She stared at him, incredulity and growing shadows of terror in her face.

"That sounds monstrous, doesn't it? You'll tell me that no gentleman would do such a thing! But there it stands. I've had enough fooling. I can't afford in self-protection to let you divorce me, after what's been said. I can't afford to expose myself

to the contempt of men and the scandal mongering of women such as you. No man has a right after all, to let himself be downed." He crashed a fist suddenly with a definite thud on the little gilt table. "You've done it yourself. You've tried to ruin me in business, to close the doors against me. Do you think I can stand for that?"

"David," she shrank away from him.

"As for that cad who has dared mention my name in an offensive manner, he's going to get what he deserves good and plenty and find out that I'm not the fool you've made him think me."

"You won't . . . kill him?"

"It seems to me I recognize this scene with a few changes," observed David bitterly. "Kill him! No, he isn't worth it, I'll let him marry you instead, if he wants to when I've finished with him."

"You can't divorce me," she cried. "You can't."

David looked at her with pitiless, keen eyes. "If I spend every cent I have in the world, I'll do it," he said. "Don't you deceive yourself into thinking I can't. Any United States court will send over a commission to investigate such proof as I can give them. And I'd be willing to bet on the verdict."

"I'll swear it's a lie . . . I'll tell them it's a lie."

"Go ahead."

She faced him quiveringly aggressive, all attempts at control abandoned. "You'd never dare stand up against me."

He shrugged his shoulders and started for the

door. Now that he had told her what he intended to do; now that he had asserted himself, and that a definite attitude had taken firm root in his mind and spirit, all he wished in the world was to leave her, to leave the nervous, untenable atmosphere in which he had lived so long.

But when she saw his motion she darted at him and clutched his arm. "You shan't go like this."

He stood quietly until she dropped her hold of him. "There's nothing you can say or do will make me change my mind," he told her. "My decision is irrevocable . . . I'm not angry with you. Not even that. It isn't vengeance either . . . Nothing so melodramatic. But I'm just a man who's going to protect himself, and other men. I was ready to spare you, to consent to all the sickening farce of a divorce where I would be the one to blame. I was wrong. You've never done a redeeming thing since you married me. You've never shown by word or thought, that you were capable of being square. I've been sacrificed at every turn — money, self-respect," his voice had grown weary. "I don't know how much harm you've done, how many people believe you and him. But I won't be stabbed in the back, not yet awhile. You've gotten hold of the wrong end, Lucia."

She edged towards him suddenly pleading. "I may have seemed selfish, David. I'll try to be more reasonable. I'll go to Reno. There won't be any trouble for you there."

"It's too late," he said and moved slowly toward the door, as if fate were pushing him.

"Oh, I hate you!" she cried suddenly. Her voice rose to a piercing note. Her face distorted and pale, her eyes fiercely blue, she glared at him in revealed ugliness. He kept his gaze fixed upon the sapphire pin of her dress. He could not look at her eyes.

"I hate you!" she went on in a rising passion. "It does me good to tell you. I hate you!"

"Now we're getting at the truth," remarked David.

She flew like a wild thing to the door, catching the train of her dress on the nail of a chair and ripping the brocade with a dry tearing sound.

There she stood barring the way out, and breathing in short, quick gasps. "You shan't go till you hear the truth, since you're so fond of it. I did say all those things. Now are you content? Ludwig only said what I told him to. And they are true. You have left me lots of times without money; you have been drunk; I shouldn't be surprised if you hadn't known too, all along, about Ludwig."

David strode forward and seized her by a wrist. "None of that," he warned roughly; "be more careful what you say."

"Well, you wanted to hear!" she cried. "I'll tell everyone, and I'll keep on telling them what you are. I'll ruin you."

"You'll do nothing of the kind."

She struggled like a white and gold flame in his grasp. But his hold on her tightened. Then she raised a desperate face to his. "Everyone will be-

lieve me," she said savagely: "no one will believe you."

Red fumes mounted to David's head. He saw her as through a red veil and bent over her.

"Hurt me!" she screamed, "just hurt me. It's like you."

The door was flung open and Mrs. Earle rushed into the room. Behind her in the hall huddled the servants with frightened inquisitive faces. "Lucia . . . my child!"

David suddenly released his hold. There was a scarlet mark on her wrist where he had gripped her. "Oh, Lord," he muttered in a disgusted voice.

Lucia ran sobbing and choking into her mother's arms.

Mrs. Earle murmured incoherent words of distraught concern, glaring at David over her daughter's bowed head. All dignity and cautious control had left her face. She looked at him with unconcealed anger, distrust and resentment. "How dare you come back here?"

David turned on her in a flash. "You be careful too, what you say, Mrs. Earle. I've had enough of all this nonsense. As far as that goes, I've paid for everything in the apartment, even your clothes and the jewelry you wear."

"You brute!"

The sight of her with her arm around Lucia and hate of him in her face exasperated David.

"The whole damned thing is your fault," he shouted; "you've played a pretty part in this business. Lucia can thank you for what's coming to

her. You've been my enemy ever since the beginning; your own husband as much as told me not to trust you. To think I ever hoped to find a mother in you!"

"You're mad," said Mrs. Earle.

"I've never been saner," he retorted; "you've been at the bottom of everything since the beginning. Lucia's listened to you, but she's lied to you, too. That's what mothers like you get in the end. It's lucky all mothers aren't like you." He paused for breath. All the grievance, the hurt, the contempt of the last months had burst bounds, and rose in a torrent of gall.

Lucia was whimpering softly. Mrs. Earle had tried to speak once or twice but David's voice had been the stronger. "You make a fine mother!" he ended harshly.

"If you've finished, you'd better go," murmured Mrs. Earle. She could hardly speak. She looked at him now as she would at a wild animal who had been suddenly let loose in the room.

"Yes, I've finished," answered David, looking straight at her, with steady eyes. "I've finished. But nothing I can say, can mend the things you and your daughter have broken."

"David," sobbed Lucia.

"Let him go."

"Mother, you don't know."

"Oh, take your medicine like a man, Lucia," said David and with a last look at the two women locked in one another's arms, he strode from the room. Behind him Lucia's sobs rose to the wail of hysteria.

The servants made way for him, effacing themselves as he passed.

He clanged the front door to with vigor.

Once on the street, the evening air bathed him in its indifferent serenity. He felt suddenly calmed and breathed deep. The sky was thick with small stars. He strode up the street, arms swinging, head held high. Then for a brief moment, his face softened to an expression of wistfulness. He was thinking of Dorothy Roley. As he thought of her, he imagined almost unconsciously life with such a companion, life indeed with Dorothy herself. A solemn intuition of destiny linked this sweet picture with a possible future. When all had dropped from him, when all the distasteful pain of life with Lucia had faded, there would be Dorothy waiting. He felt sure that he would find her. For her sake he might end this sad affair in a quieter way, so that he might come to her soft footed. But there was still grim business to be done before he regained self-respect and justice.

Like a powerful machine set in motion, he followed now the impetus of his will, and walked briskly down the Champs Élysées, up the Ave de l'Alma to the Cours la Reine. He had no clear idea in his head why he was choosing to go then and at once to the Anglo club, where he had been so seldom. But he knew that before the evening was over he must see von Lenze, and von Lenze was a member of the Anglo club.

Standing discreetly between two pretentious house fronts, this club gave an impression of suave and

conservative law and order. David entered it swiftly, passed up the soft red carpeted stairs, and found himself in the big room with its large center table, its arm-chairs, its perfumes of leather and tobacco.

A group of men were lolling in a circle near an open window. They suggested relaxed ease and animal comfort. Their shirt fronts and collars were flawless, their hair glossy, the cut of their clothes impeccable. Von Lenze lounged in a big leather chair, idly reading a newspaper.

Then David, at sight of the lean, dry features, the narrow shoulders of this man, knew why he had come, hoping for just this meeting.

Von Lenze lifted his eyes, saw David and looked hastily down again at his paper, with obvious intention of ignoring him. A little smile flickered around his thin mouth and was gone. David noticed the smile as he advanced deliberately towards the group, never once removing his steady gaze from the man he had come to find.

Other men in the circle had become aware of his presence. One or two of them were acquaintances, and all knew who he was. A vague embarrassment and strain hovered in the air, but the talk continued, elaborately affecting indifference to the situation. A man who had sometimes chatted with David, made him a little amicable sign. But David imagined that he was being examined covertly with sneers and suspicion. His name had surely been mentioned in this club, his honor and manhood questioned. The frown on his face tightened to resolve.

Von Lenze never raised his head, although he must have felt David's eyes upon him. Only when David approached directly and stood beside him as a shadow, did he look up — and then reluctantly.

"Mr. von Lenze, I want to speak to you alone," said David. His voice rang out, louder than all the desultory talk, which as if it had been waiting for some such sensation, sank to listening quiet.

Von Lenze rose slowly. "I have nothing to say to you, Monsieur. I do not know you," he answered, with a slight German accent, and stared at David insolently.

"I tell you I want a moment's conversation with you. You know perfectly well who I am," said David. He tried to keep his control, but the sound of von Lenze's voice, the narrowed eyes, the faint sneer on his lips, were like so many lashes of a whip.

"I'm sorry, Monsieur, you have made a mistake. I have never had the pleasure." Von Lenze half turned his back as if to walk away.

"You coward!" cried David.

The other man started with an involuntary stiffening of his body.

Suddenly the thing which had mounted in higher and higher waves surged forward unconquerable. David raised a clenched fist and with a great swing drove it at von Lenze, catching him under the chin. He whirled around like a top and fell.

There was instant confusion. Men sprang forward in a blur of action.

Von Lenze scrambled to his feet and lunged blindly at David, who, with a solid crash of fist

sent him staggering again, rolling on the floor, this time to lie still, bleeding from a cut lip.

David stood erect and quivering facing the men who clustered about von Lenze, staring with different masks of expressions — stupefaction and vaguely indicated sympathy. There was a silence that lasted a second, while David drew breath. The room and the men seemed drawn together compactly in a tense instant of suspense. Then David spoke.

"Gentlemen, I apologize for this breach of hospitality. I'm an American and I don't fight duels. This man needed a public hiding. He's a liar and a cad. He ought not to be permitted in such company as yours. If he wants another licking, he's only got to come to see me and I'll give it to him. Gentlemen, I wish you good evening."

He looked around as if challenging a word of reproach or blame. There was no word.

Then a great sense of deliverance, as of a weight lifted from his heart, came to him. He felt that he could look any man there in the face and stand equal to him.

He wheeled about, and walked proudly down the stairs to the out of doors,— his shoulders squared, his eyes like the eyes of a young hunting dog. He felt as if he had by violent action, asserted himself once and for all; that before him now the way lay strong and free. He thought once of Dorothy Roley.

Behind him, in stain and shadow were scattered broken things. But a man must dare to break what is fettering and unworthy, to reach the future.

THE END

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